This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

3 3433 06827278 4

SERMONS

BY

JEAN-BAPTISTE MASSILLON,

BISHOP OF CLERMONT.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

THE LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.

SELECTED AND TRANSLATED

BY WILLIAM DICKSON,

AND

DEDICATED, BY PERMISSION,

TO

HER GRACE

THE DUTCHESS OF BUCCLEUGH.

COMPLETE IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOLUME I.

BROOKLYN:

PRINTED FOR THOMAS S. ARDEN, NO. 186, PEARL-STREET, NEW-YORK.

T. KIRK, PRINTER.

1803.

PUBLIC LIBRARY
913924
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

TO HER GRACE

THE DUTCHESS OF BUCCLEUGH.

MADAM,

IN conſequence of your permitting me to addreſs my Tranſlation of the following Sermons to your GRACE, the general approbation will be ſecured to at leaſt one part of my Publication.

It is not your rank in the world, Madam, elevated as it is, which renders your protection of any part of the amiable MASSILLON's Works ſo eminently proper; it is your rank in the hearts of the good and virtuous, ſuch as he was, who will unanimouſly acknowledge the propriety of the Dedication.

Were

Were I at liberty to mention inſtances, within the ſphere of my own knowledge, of your GRACE's humanity and benevolence, the pleaſure with which I ſeize this opportunity of expreſſing my veneration for your character, would be little wondered at; nor would the ſincerity be doubted, with which I ſubſcribe myſelf,

Madam,

Your GRACE's moſt reſpectful,

And moſt obedient ſervant.

William Dickson.

TRANS-

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

TO THE

PUBLIC.

It is equally proper for a Tranſlator, as for an Author, to give ſome explanation (not apology, for ſurely a generous Public will require none, when the diſſemination of virtue is evidently the purpoſe) of the production which he obtrudes upon the public.

This Tranſlation was at firſt undertaken, merely for the recreation, during illneſs, of the Tranſlator; his admiration of Maſſillon's abilities, increaſing as he went on, he was induced to continue, far beyond his firſt intention; that animation, that unction, as D'Alembert ſays, which flowed from his pen on every ſubject, that gentle, yet feeling addreſs to the hearts of his hearers, and to which the moſt indifferent could not refuſe attention, ſtruck him ſo forcibly, that he could not reflect, without ſurpriſe, that no tranſlation of his works had as yet appeared in Engliſh. Impreſſed with a conviction of their moral tendency, he determined, in conſequence of the approbation of ſome reſpectable clergymen, his friends, to publiſh a ſelection of ſuch as, unconnected with local or temporary events in France, would, in his opinion, be an acceptable preſent to Chriſtians of every denomination. He now offers the preſent volume to the public; and ſo impreſſed is he with a ſenſe of their merit, that he is convinced

vinced that the weakneſs, or the inaccuracy of the Tranſlation, can alone prevent a generous Public from receiving them favourably.

In the Tranſlation, he has endeavoured, as much as in him lay, to convey the meaning and ſentiments of his Original; in doing of which, he may perhaps be thought ſometimes too literal; but if the meaning be conveyed, ſurely the error is on the ſafeſt ſide; for many of our tranſlations, may with much more propriety be called paraphraſes than tranſlations; and, (at leaſt in the Tranſlator's opinion), it is much better to err, in keeping rather too cloſely to the text, than by ſtudiouſly avoiding the appearance of literality, to render the ſenſe both obſcure and unintelligible. If the Tranſlator be miſtaken, it is an error which in future may eaſily be corrected; and this being his firſt publication, he truſts that a generous Public will not caſhier a ſubaltern, becauſe he may not as yet be capable of diſcharging the duty of a general officer.

The Tranſlator takes this opportunity of returning his acknowledgments to his friends above mentioned, from whoſe advice he has reaped many advantages.

LIFE

LIFE

OF

MASSILLON:

(Extracted from the Diſcourſe of Monſieur Le Marquis D'Alembert, on his admiſſion into the Royal Academy of Paris.)

JEAN-BAPTISTE MASSILLON was born in Provence in the year 1663. His father was a poor attorney of that inconſiderable place. The obſcurity of his birth, which gives ſo much luſtre to the ſplendour of his perſonal merit, ſhould make a chief feature in his panegyric; and it may be ſaid of him, as was ſaid of the illuſtrious Roman, who owed nothing to his anceſtors, *Videtur ex ſe natus*: He ſeemed to have produced himſelf.

He entered the Oratory at ſeventeen: The ſuperiors of Maſſillon ſoon ſaw the fame which he would bring to their congregation. They deſtined him to the pulpit; but, it was from a principle of obedience alone, that he conſented to ſecond their views: He was the only one who did not foreſee that future celebrity, by which his humility and his modeſty were to be rewarded.

The young Maſſillon did every thing in his power to avoid that fame. He had already, while in the country, by order of his ſuperiors, pronounced the funeral orations of

of two Archbiſhops. Theſe diſcourſes, which were indeed nothing but the attempts of a youth, but of a youth, who ſhewed what he would one day be, had the moſt brilliant ſucceſs. The humble orator, alarmed at his growing reputation, and dreading, as he ſaid, the dæmon of pride, reſolved to eſcape him for ever, by ſecluding himſelf in the moſt obſcure retreat. He repaired to the Abbey of Septfons, where the ſame diſcipline is obſerved as at La Trappe; and there he took the habit.

During his noviciate, the Cardinal de Noailles addreſſed to the Abbè of Septfons, whoſe virtue he reſpected, a charge which he had juſt publiſhed. The Abbè, more religious than eloquent, but preſerving ſtill at leaſt for thoſe of his communion ſome remains of ſelf-love, wiſhed to return an anſwer to the Cardinal, worthy of the charge he had received. This office he entruſted to Maſſillon, who performed it with as much readineſs as ſucceſs. The Cardinal, aſtoniſhed at receiving from that quarter, a piece ſo well written, was not afraid of wounding the vanity of the Abbé of Septfons, by aſking, who was the author of it; when, the Abbè's mentioning Maſſillon, the prelate immediately replied, that ſuch talents were not in the language of Scripture, to remain hid under a buſhel. He obliged the novice to quit the habit, and reſume that of the Oratory. He placed him in the ſeminary of St. Magloire in Paris, exhorting him to cultivate the eloquence of the pulpit, and promiſing to make his fortune, which the young orator confined to that of an apoſtle, that is, to the mere neceſſaries of life, accompanied with the moſt exemplary ſimplicity.

His firſt Sermons produced the effect, which his ſuperiors, and the Cardinal de Noailles, had foreſeen. Scarcely had

had he ſhewn himſelf in the churches of Paris, than he eclipſed almoſt all thoſe who had ſhone in the ſame ſphere. He had declared that he would nót preach like them; not from any preſumptuous ſentiment of ſuperiority, but from the juſt and rational idea he had formed of Chriſtian eloquence. He was perſuaded, that if a miniſter of the goſpel degrades himſelf by circulating known truths in vulgar language, he fails, on the other hand, in thinking to reclaim, by profound argumentation, a multitude of hearers, who are by no means able to comprehend him; that though all who hear him may not have the advantage of education, yet all of them have a heart, at which the preacher ſhould aim; that in the pulpit, man ſhould be exhibited to himſelf, not to frighten him by the horror of the picture, but to afflict him by its reſemblance; and that if it is ſometimes uſeful to terrify and alarm him, it is oftener profitable to draw forth thoſe extatic tears, that are more efficacious than thoſe of deſpair.

Such was the plan that Maſſillon propoſed to follow, and which he executed like a man who had conceived it, that is, like a man of genius. He excells in that property of an orator, which can alone ſupply all the reſt; in that eloquence, which goes directly to the ſoul, which agitates, without convulſing; which alarms, without appalling; which penetrates, without rending the heart. He ſearches out the hidden folds, in which the paſſions lie enveloped; theſe ſecret ſophiſms, which blind and ſeduce. To combat and to deſtroy theſe ſophiſms, he has in general only to unfold them: This he does with an unction ſo affectionate and ſo tender, that he allures us rather than compels; and even when he ſhews us the picture of our vices, he intereſts and delights us the moſt. His diction, always ſmooth and elegant, and pure, is every where marked with that

noble ſimplicity, without which, there is neither good taſte nor true eloquence; a ſimplicity, which being united in Maſſillon, with the ſweeteſt and moſt bewitching harmony, borrowed from this latter additional graces; but what compleats the charm of this enchanting ſtyle, is our conviction, that ſo many beauties ſpring from an exuberant ſource, and are produced without effort or pain. It ſometimes happen, indeed, that a few inaccuracies eſcape him, either in the expreſſion, in the term of the phraſe, or in the affecting melody of his ſtyle; ſuch inaccuracies, however, my be called happy ones, for they completely prevent us from ſuſpecting the leaſt degree of labour in his compoſition. It was by this happy negligence, that Maſſillon gained as many friends as auditors: He knew, that the more an orator is intent upon gaining admiration, the leſs thoſe who hear him are diſpoſed to grant it: and that this ambition is the rock on which ſo many preachers have ſplit, who being entruſted, if one dare thus to expreſs it, with the intereſts of the Deity, wiſh to mingle with them the inſignificant intereſts of their own vanity. He compared the ſtudied eloquence of learned preachers to thoſe flowers, which grow ſo luxuriantly amongſt the corn, that are lovely to the view, but noxious to the corn.

Maſſillon reaped another advantage from that heart-affecting eloquence, which he made ſo happy an uſe of. As he ſpoke the language of all conditions, becauſe he ſpoke to the heart, all deſcriptions of men flocked to his ſermons; even unbelievers were eager to hear him; they often found inſtruction, when they expected only amuſement, and returned ſometimes converted, when they thought they were only beſtowing or with-holding their praiſe. Maſſillon could deſcend to the language, which alone they would liſten to, that of a philoſophy, apparently human, but

but which, finding every avenue to the heart laid open, allowed the orator to approach without effort and aſſiſtance; and made him conqueror, even before he had engaged.

His action perfectly correſponded with the kind of eloquence he had cultivated. The moment he entered the pulpit, he ſeemed deeply impreſſed with the great truths he was about to declare; with eyes caſt down, a modeſt and collected air, without any violent motions, with few or no geſtures, but animating all by an affecting and impreſſive voice, he communicated to his hearers the religious ſentiment which his external appearance announced; he commanded that profound ſilence, which is a higher compliment to eloquence, than the moſt tumultuous plaudits. He appeared on that great and dangerous theatre, equally devoid of pride as of fear: His firſt attempt was uncommonly brilliant, and the exordium of his firſt diſcourſe is one of the maſter-pieces of modern eloquence. Lewis XIV. was then in the zenith of his power and glory; he had been victorious in every part of Europe; he was adored by his ſubjects, intoxicated with fame, and ſurfeited with adulation. Maſſillon chooſe for his text that paſſage of Scripture which ſeemed the leaſt adapted to ſuch a prince, "Bleſſed are they who weep;" and from that text he conveyed a compliment the more new, and artful, and flattering, as it appeared to be dictated by the goſpel itſelf, and ſuch as an Apoſtle might have paid. "Sire," ſaid he, addreſſing the king, "if the world were to ſpeak "to your Majeſty from this place, it would not ſay, Bleſ-"ſed are they who weep. Happy, would it ſay, that "prince who has never fought but to conquer; who hath "filled the univerſe with his fame; who, in the courſe of "a long and proſperous reign, has enjoyed all that men ad-

"mire,

" mire, the ſplendour of conqueſt, the love of his people, " the eſteem of his enemies, the wiſdom of his laws. But, " Sire, the goſpel does not ſpeak the language of the world." The audience of Verſailles, accuſtomed as it was to Bourdalous and Boſſuets, had never witneſſed an eloquence at once ſo delicate and noble; and accordingly, it excited in the congregation an involuntary movement of admiration.

Our orator was always firm, but always reſpectful, while he announced to his ſovereign, the will of Him who is the Judge of Kings; he fulfilled the duty of the miniſtry, but he never exceeded it; and the Monarch, who perhaps retired from his chapel diſſatisfied with ſome other preachers, never left the ſermons of Maſſillon, without being diſſatisfied with himſelf. This the Prince was honeſt enough to confeſs to Maſſillon; the greateſt compliment he could pay him, but a compliment which many others before and after Maſſillon never wiſhed to obtain, being more anxious to ſend away a hearer enraptured, than a ſinner converted.

Lewis XIV. died; and the Regent, who honoured the talents of Maſſillon, and deſpiſed his enemies, named him to the biſhopric of Clermont; he wanted, moreover, that the Court ſhould hear him once more, and engaged him to preach ſome Lent ſermons before the King, then of the age of nine years.

Theſe ſermons compoſed in leſs than three months, are known by the name of *Petit Carime*. Though they are not in the higheſt degree finiſhed, they are a true model of pulpit eloquence. The great ſermons of the ſame author may poſſeſs more pathos and vehemence; but the eloquence

quence of theſe is more inſinuating and delicate, and the charm reſulting from them is enhanced by the importance of the ſubject, by the ineſtimable value of thoſe ſimple affecting leſſons, which being fitted to penetrate, as agreeably as forcibly, the heart of the young Monarch, ſeem calculated to procure the happineſs of millions, by acquainting the Prince with what was expected of him.

The ſame year in which theſe diſcourſes were pronounced, Maſſillon was admitted into the French academy. Maſſillon had juſt been made a biſhop; but no place at Court, no buſineſs, no pretence of any kind, could detain him at a diſtance from his flock. He departed for Clermont, whence he never returned, but on account of indiſpenſable occaſions, and conſequently very rarely. He gave all his attention to the happy people whom providence had confided to his care. He benevolently dedicated to the inſtruction of the poor, thoſe ſame talents, ſo much eſteemed by the great of this world, and preferred to the loud applauſes of the courtier, the ſimple and earneſt attention of an auditory, leſs brilliant, but more teachable. Perhaps the moſt eloquent of his ſermons are the conferences he held with his curates. He preached to them the virtues of which he ſet an example, diſintereſtedneſs, ſimplicity, forgetfulneſs of himſelf, the active and prudent earneſtneſs of an enlightened conviction, very different from that fanaticiſm which proves nothing but the blindneſs of zeal, and which makes the ſincerity of it very doubtful. A wiſe moderation was indeed his predominant character.

Deeply impreſſed with a ſenſe of the true duties of his ſtation, Maſſillon fulfilled the principal function of a biſhop, that which attracts love and reſpect from incredulity itſelf, the delightful exerciſe of humanity and benevolence. He ſent,

ent, in the ſpace of two years, twenty thouſand livres to he Hotel Dieu at Clermont. His whole revenue was at the ſervice of the poor. His dioceſe retain the remembrance of his benefits, now after thirty years, and his memory is ſtill honoured by the moſt eloquent of all funeral orations, the tears of an hundred thouſand people whom his bounty made happy:

This funeral oration he enjoyed in his life time. Whenever he appeared in the ſtreets of Clermont the people proſtrated themſelves before him, calling him father, and invoking bleſſings on his head. Among the immenſe alms which he beſtowed, there were ſome acts of charity which he carefully concealed, not only to ſpare the delicacy of unhappy individuals, who received them, but to relieve whole communities from feelings of inquietude, and the fears which ſuch alms might inſpire them with.

Not only was he liberal of his fortune to the indigent, but he employed for them beſides, with as much zeal as ſucceſs, both his intereſt and his pen. Being a witneſs, in his dioceſian viſitations, of the miſery under which the inhabitants of the country groaned, and his revenue not being ſufficient to give bread to ſuch a multitude of indigent creatures, that implored it of him, he wrote to the Court in their favour, and, by the energetic and affecting picture which he drew of their neceſſities, he obtained either actual contributions for them, or a conſiderable abatement of their taxes. I am aſſured that his letters on this ſubject are maſter-pieces of eloquence and pathos, ſuperior even to the moſt affecting of his ſermons; and what emotions, indeed, muſt not the ſpectacle of human nature, ſuffering and oppreſſed, have excited in the virtuous and compaſſionate ſoul of Maſſillon!

He

He died as Fenelon died, and as every biſhop ought, without wealth, and without debt. It was on the 28th September 1742, that the church and eloquence, and humanity ſuffered the irreparable loſs.

A circumſtance which happened not long ago, calculated to affect every heart of ſenſibility, proves how dear the memory of Maſſillon is, not only to the poor whoſe tears he wiped away, but to all who knew him. Some years ago, a traveller paſſing through Clermont wiſhed to ſee the country-houſe in which the prelate uſed to ſpend the greateſt part of the year, and he applied to an old vicar, who, ſince the death of the biſhop, had never ventured to return to that country-houſe, where he who inhabited was no longer to be found. He conſented, however, to gratify the deſire of the traveller, notwithſtanding the profound grief he expected to ſuffer, in reviſiting a place ſo dear to his remembrance. They accordingly ſet out together, and the vicar pointed out every particular place to the ſtranger. "There," ſaid he, with tears in his eyes, "is the alley in which the "prelate uſed to walk with us—there is the arbor in which "he uſed to ſit and read—this is the garden he took plea-"ſure in cultivating with his own hands." Then they entered the houſe, and when they came to the room where Maſſillon died, "this," ſaid the vicar, is the place where "we loſt him:" And as he pronounced theſe words, he fainted. The aſhes of Titus, or of Marcus Aurelius, might have envied ſuch a tribute of regard and affection.

CONTENTS.

CONTENTS.

SERM.		PAGE.
I.	*On Salvation,*	17
II.	*On the Small Number of the Saved,*	48
III.	*The Diſguſts accompanying Virtue,*	77
IV.	*The Uncertainty of Righteouſneſs in a State of Lukewarmneſs,*	102
V.	*The Certainty of the Loſs of Righteouſneſs in a State of Lukewarmneſs,*	127
VI.	*On Evil-Speaking,*	157
VII.	*On the Employment of Time,*	188
VIII.	*The Certainty of a Future State,*	215
IX.	*On Death,*	243
X.	*The Death of a Sinner, and that of a Righteous Character,*	271
XI.	*On Charity.*	306
XII.	*On Affliction,*	342
XIII.	*On Prayer,*	369
XIV.	*Forgiveneſs of Injuries,*	397
XV.	*The Woman who was a Sinner,*	428
XVI.	*The Word of God,*	457

SERMON

SERMON I.

ON SALVATION.

JOHN vii. 6.

My time is not yet come; but your time is always ready.

THE reproach which is directed by Jeſus Chriſt, againſt his relations according to the fleſh, who preſſed him to ſhew himſelf to the world and to go up to Jeruſalem, in order to acquire thoſe honours which were due to his great talents, may, with propriety, be directed againſt the greateſt part of this audience. The time which they give to their fortune, to their advancement, to their pleaſures, is always ready; it is always time to labour towards the acquirement of wealth and glory, and to ſatisfy their paſſions: That is the time of man: But the time of Jeſus Chriſt, that is to ſay, the time of working out their ſalvation, is never ready; they delay, they put it off; they always expect its arrival, and it never arrives.

The ſlighteſt worldly intereſts agitate them, and make them undertake every thing: For what is the world itſelf, whoſe deceitful ways they follow, but an eternal agitation, where the paſſions ſet every thing in motion; where tranquility is the only pleaſure unknown; where cares are ho-

nourable; where thoſe who are at reſt, think themſelves unhappy; where all is toil and affliction of ſpirit; in a word, where all are in motion, and all are deceived? Surely, my brethren, when we ſee men ſo occupied, ſo intereſted, ſo patient in their purſuits, we would ſuppoſe them labouring for everlaſting ages, and for riches which ought to ſecure their happineſs: How can we comprehend, that ſo much toil and agitation has nothing in view but a fortune, whoſe duration ſcarcely equals that of the labours which have gained it; and that a life ſo rapid, is ſpent with ſo much fatigue, in the ſearch of wealth which muſt periſh along with it!

Nevertheleſs, a miſtake, which the ſlighteſt inveſtigation is ſufficient to expoſe, is become the error of by far the majority. In vain does religion call us to more neceſſary and more important cares; in vain it announces to us, that to labour for what muſt paſs away, is only amaſſing, at a great expence, heaps of ſand, which tumble upon our heads, as faſt as we raiſe them up; that the higheſt pitch of elevation to which we can attain here below, is always that which verges upon our death, and is the gate of eternity; and that nothing is worthy of man, but what will endure as long as man. The cares of the paſſions are always weighty and important: The ſteps alone which we take for heaven, are weak and languid: Salvation alone, we conſider as an amuſement: We toil for frivolous riches, as if we laboured for eternal poſſeſſions; we labour for eternal poſſeſſions, as if we toiled for frivolous riches.

Yes, my brethren, our cares for this world are always animated; obſtacles, fatigues, diſappointments, nothing can repulſe us; Our cares for this world are always prudent; dangers, ſnares, perplexities, competitions, nothing can make us miſtake our aim; whereas our cares for ſalvation bear

bear a very different character; nothing can be more languid, or leſs intereſting to us, although obſtacles and diſguſts there, are ſo much to be dreaded; nothing can be more inconſiderate; although the multiplicity of ways, and the number of rocks for us to ſplit upon, render miſtakes in it ſo familiar and common.

We muſt labour, therefore, towards its accompliſhment, with fervour and prudence; with fervour, in order not to be repulſed; with prudence, in order not to be miſtaken.

PART. I.—Undoubtedly nothing in this life ought to intereſt us more than the care of our eternal ſalvation; beſides, that this is the grand affair upon which our ALL depends, we even have not, properly ſpeaking, any other upon the earth; and the infinite and diverſe occupations attached to our places, to our rank, to our ſituations in life, ought to be only different modes of labouring towards our ſalvation.

Nevertheleſs, this care ſo glorious, to which every thing we do, and whatever we are, relate, is of all others the moſt deſpiſed; this chief care, which ſhould be at the head of our other purſuits, gives place to them all in the detail of our actions; this care ſo amiable, and to which the promiſes of faith, and the conſolations of grace, attach ſo many comforts, is of all others become for us, the moſt diſguſting, and the moſt melancholy. And, behold, my brethren, from whence ſprings this want of fervour in the buſineſs of our eternal ſalvation; we purſue it without eſteem, without preference, and without inclination. Let us inveſtigate and illuſtrate theſe ideas.

It is a very deplorable error, that mankind has attached the moſt pompous names to all the enterpriſes of the paſſions;

ſions; and that the cares for our ſalvation have not, in the opinions of men, been capable of meriting the ſame honour, and the ſame eſteem. Military toils are regarded by us as the path of reputation and glory; the intrigues and the commotions which contribute to our advancement in the world, are looked upon as the ſecrets of a profound wiſdom; ſchemes and negociations which arm mankind againſt each other, and which frequently make the ambition of an individual the ſource of public calamities, paſs for extent of genius, and ſuperiority of talents; the art of raiſing from an obſcure patrimony, a monſtrous and overgrown fortune, at the expence often of juſtice and probity, is the ſcience of buſineſs, and individual good management. In a word, the world has found out the ſecret of ſetting off by honourable titles, all the different cares which are connected with the things of this earth. The actions of faith alone, which ſhall endure eternally; which ſhall form the hiſtory of the age to come, and ſhall be engraven during all eternity upon the immortal columns of the heavenly Jeruſalem, are accounted idle and obſcure occupations; the lot of weak and limited ſouls, and have nothing which exalt them in the eyes of men. Such, my brethren, is the firſt cauſe of our indifference towards the buſineſs of our ſalvation: We do not ſufficiently eſteem that holy undertaking, to labour at it with fervour.

Now, I do not think it neceſſary to ſtop here, and combat an illuſion, which ſo flagrantly violates right reaſon. For what is it that can render a work glorious to the perſon who undertakes it? Is it the duration and the immortality which it promiſes in the memory of men? Alas! all the monuments of pride will periſh with the world which has reared them up; whatever we do for the earth, will experience the ſame deſtiny which it will one day undergo: Victories and conqueſts, the moſt ſplendid enterpriſes, and

and all the hiſtory of the ſinners whoſe names adorn the preſent age, will be effaced from the remembrance of men; the works of the juſt alone, will be immortal, and, written forever in the book of life, will ſurvive the entire ruin of the univerſe. Is it the recompenſe which is held out to us for it? But whoever is unable to render us happy, is conſequently unable to recompenſe us; and there is no other who has that power but God himſelf. Is it the dignity of the occupations to which they engage you? But the moſt honourable cares of the world are merely games, on which our error and abſurdity have beſtowed ſerious and pompous names: Here, on the contrary, every thing is great; we love the Author of our exiſtence alone; we adore the Sovereign of the univerſe; we ſerve an Almighty Maſter; we covet only eternal riches; we form projects for heaven alone; we labour for an immortal crown.

What is there upon earth, then, more glorious, or more worthy of man, than the cares of eternity? Proſperities are honourable anxieties; ſplendid employments an illuſtrious ſervitude; reputation is frequently a public error: titles and dignities are rarely the fruit of virtue, and, at the moſt, ſerve only to adorn our tombs, and embelliſh our aſhes; great talents, if faith does not regulate their uſe, are only great temptations; deep knowledge, a wind which inflates and corrupts, if faith does not correct its venom; all theſe are only grand, by the uſe which may be made of them towards ſalvation: Virtue alone is eſtimable for itſelf.

Nevertheleſs, if our competitors are more ſucceſsful, and more elevated than we in the world, we view their ſituation with envious eyes; and their aggrandiſement, in humbling our pride, reanimates the fervour of our deſigns, and

and gives new life to our expectations; but, it happens ſometimes, that the accomplices of our pleaſures, changed ſuddenly into new men, nobly break all the ſhameful bonds of the paſſions, and borne upon the wings of grace, enter in our ſight, into the path of ſalvation, whilſt they leave us behind them, to wander ſtill unfortunately, at the pleaſure of our illicit deſires. We view with a tranquil eye the prodigy of their change; and their lot far from exciting our envy, and awaking in us any weak deſires of ſalvation, only induces us, perhaps, to think on replacing the void which their retreat has made in the world; of elevating ourſelves to thoſe dangerous offices from which they have juſt deſcended through motives of religion and faith: What ſhall I ſay? We become, perhaps, the cenſurers of their virtues: We ſeek elſewhere than in the infinite treaſures of grace, the ſecret motives of their change; to the work of God we give views entirely worldly; and our deplorable cenſures become the moſt dangerous trials of their repentance. It is thus, O my God! that Thou ſhedeſt avenging darkneſs over iniquitous paſſions! Whence comes this? We want eſteem for the holy undertaking of ſalvation: This is the firſt cauſe of our indifference.

In the *ſecond* place, We labour in it with indolence, becauſe we do not make a principal object of its attainment, and becauſe we never give a preference to it over our other purſuits. In effect, my brethren, we all wiſh to be ſaved; the moſt deplorable ſinners do not renounce this hope; we even wiſh, that amongſt our actions, there may always be found ſome which relate to our ſalvation; for none deceive themſelves ſo far as to believe, that, they ſhall be entitled to the glory of the holy, without having ever made a ſingle exertion towards rendering themſelves worthy of it; but

but the point in which we commonly deceive ourſelves is, the rank which we give to theſe works, amidſt the other occupations which divide our life.

The trifles, the attentions which we laviſh ſo profuſely in our intercourſe with ſociety, the functions of a charge, domeſtic arrangements, paſſions and pleaſures, their times and their moments marked in our days. Where do we place the work of ſalvation? What rank do we give to this ſpecial care, above our other cares? Do we even make a buſineſs of it? And, to enter into the particulars of your conduct. What do you perform for eternity which you do not for the world an hundred fold? You ſometimes employ a ſmall portion of your wealth in religious charities; but what are theſe when compared to the ſums which you ſacrifice every day to your pleaſures, to your paſſions, and to your caprices? In the morning you, perhaps, raiſe up your mind to the Lord in prayer; but does not the world, in a moment, reſume its place in your heart, and is not the remainder of the day devoted to it? You regularly attend, perhaps, in order to fulfil the external duties of religion; but, without entering into the motives which frequently carry you there, this individual exerciſe of religion, Is it not compenſated by devoting the remainder of the day to indolent and worldly purſuits? You ſometimes correct your inclinations; you perhaps bear with an injury; you undertake the diſcharge of ſome pious obligation; but theſe are individual and inſulated exertions, out of the common tract, and which are never followed by any regular conſequences; you will be unable to produce before the Lord, a ſingle inſtance of theſe in your favour, without the enemy having it at the ſame time in his power to reckon a thouſand againſt you; ſalvation occupies your intervals alone; the world has, as I may ſay, the foundation

tion and the principal: The moments are for God, our entire life is for ourſelves.

I know, my brethren, that with regard to this, you feel ſenſibly the injuſtice and the danger of your own conduct. You confeſs, that the agitations of the world, of buſineſs, and of pleaſures, almoſt entirely occupy you, and that a very little time, indeed, remains for you to reflect upon ſalvation: But, in order to tranquilize yourſelves, you ſay, that ſome future day, when you ſhall be more at eaſe; when affairs of a certain nature ſhall be terminated; when particular embarraſſments ſhall be at an end; and, in a word, when certain circumſtances ſhall no longer exiſt, you will then think ſeriouſly upon your ſalvation, and the buſineſs of eternity ſhall then become your principal occupation: But, alas! your deception is this, that you regard ſalvation as incompatible with the occupations attached to the ſtation in which Providence has placed you. For, cannot you employ that ſtation as the means of your ſanctification? Can you not exerciſe in it all the Chriſtian virtues? Penitence, ſhould theſe occupations be painful and diſtreſſing; clemency, pity, juſtice, if they eſtabliſh you in authority over your fellow creatures? Submiſſion to the will of heaven, if the ſucceſs does not correſpond ſometimes with your expectations? A generous forgiveneſs of injuries, if you ſuffer oppreſſion or calumny in that ſtation; Confidence in God alone, if in it you experience the injuſtice or the inconſtancy of your maſters? Do not many individuals of your rank and ſtation, in the ſame predicament as you find yourſelves, lead a pure and Chriſtian life? You know well, that God is to be found everywhere; for, in thoſe happy moments when you have ſometimes been touched with grace, is it not true, that every thing recalled you to God? That even the dangers of your

ſtation

ſtation became the vehicles of inſtruction, and means of cure for you; that the world diſguſted you, even with the world; that you found continually and everywhere, the ſecret of offering up a thouſand inviſible ſacrifices to the Almighty, and of making your moſt hurried and tumultuous occupations the ſources of holy reflections, or of praiſeworthy and ſalutary examples? Why do you not cultivate theſe impreſſions of grace and ſalvation? It is not your ſituation in life, it is your infidelity and weakneſs, which have extinguiſhed them in your heart.

Joſeph was charged with the management of a great kingdom; he alone ſupported the whole weight of the government; nevertheleſs, did he forget the Lord, who had broken aſunder his chains, and juſtified his innocence? Or, in order to ſerve the God of his fathers; did he delay till a ſucceſſor ſhould come and reſtore that tranquility to him which his new dignities had neceſſarily deprived him of? On the contrary, he knew how to render ſerviceable towards the conſolation of his brethren, and the happineſs of the people of God, a proſperity which he acknowledged to be held only from his Almighty hand. That officer of the Queen of Ethiopia, who is mentioned in the Acts of the Apoſtles, had the ſole government of her immenſe riches; every particular with regard to tributes and ſubſidies, and the adminiſtration of all the public revenues, were entruſted to his fidelity; now, this abyſs of cares and embarraſſments did not deprive him of leiſure to ſeek, in the prophecies of Iſaiah, the ſalvation he expected, and the words of eternal life. Place yourſelves in the moſt agitated ſtations, you will find examples of upright ſouls, who in them have wrought their ſanctification: The Court may become the aſylum of virtue, as well as the cloiſter;

places and employments may be the aids, as well as the rocks of piety; and when, in order to return to God, we delay till a change of ſtation ſhall take place, it is a ſure mark that we do not as yet wiſh to change our heart. Beſides, when we ſay that ſalvation ought to be your ſole employment, we do not pretend that you ſhould renounce all other purſuits; for you would then depart from the order of God; we only wiſh you to connect them with your ſalvation; that piety may ſanctify your occupations; that faith may regulate them; that religion may animate them; that the fear of the Lord may moderate them: In a word, that ſalvation may be as the centre to which they all tend. For, to wait till you ſhall be in a more tranquil ſituation, and freer from worldly perplexities, is not only an illuſion which Satan employs to delay your repentance, but it is alſo an outrage upon the religion of Jeſus Chriſt; you thereby juſtify the reproaches formerly made againſt it, by the enemies of the Chriſtians; it would ſeem that you look upon it as incompatible with the duties of Prince, courtier, public character, and father of a family; like them, you ſeem to believe, that the goſpel propoſes only maxims unfortunate and inimical to ſociety; and that, were it believed, and ſtrictly obſerved, it would be neceſſary to quit all; to exclude ourſelves from the world; to renounce all public concerns; to break all the ties of duty, of humanity, of authority, which unite us to the reſt of mankind; and to live as if we were alone upon the earth; in place of which, it is the goſpel alone which makes us fulfil all theſe duties as they ought to be fulfilled; it is the religion of Jeſus Chriſt which can alone form pious princes, incorruptible magiſtrates, mild and gentle maſters, and faithful ſubjects, and maintain, in a juſt harmony, that variety of ſtations and conditions, upon which depend the peace

peace and tranquillity of the people, and the ſafety of empires.

But, in order to impreſs more ſenſibly upon you the illuſion of this pretext, when you ſhall be free from embarraſſment, and diſengaged from theſe external cares which at preſent detach our thoughts from ſalvation, will your heart be free from paſſions? Will thoſe iniquitous and inviſible bonds which now ſtop you, be broken aſunder? Will you be reſtored to yourſelves? Will you be more humble, more patient, more moderate, more virtuous, more mortified? Alas! It is not external agitations which check you, it is the diſorder within; it is the tumultuous ardour of the paſſions; it is not from the cares of fortune, and the embarraſſments of events and buſineſs, ſays a holy father, that confuſion and trouble proceed; it is from the irregular deſires of the ſoul; a heart in which God reigns is tranquil everywhere. Your cares for the world are only incompatible with ſalvation, becauſe the affections which attach you to it are criminal. It is not your ſtations, but your inclinations which become rocks of deſtruction to you; now, from theſe inclinations you will never be able to free yourſelves with the ſame facility as from your cares and embarraſſments; they will afterwards be even more lively, more unconquerable than ever: Beſides this fund of weakneſs which they draw from your corruption, they will have that force and ſtrength acquired by habit through time and years. You think, that in attaining reſt every thing will be accompliſhed; and you will feel, that your paſſions, more lively in proportion as they no longer find external reſources to employ them, will turn all their violence againſt yourſelves; and you will then be ſurpriſed to find in your own hearts, the ſame obſtacles which at preſent

preſent you believe to be only in what ſurrounds you. This leproſy, if I may venture to ſpeak in this manner, is not attached to your clothes, to your places, to the walls of your palaces, ſo that, by quitting them you may rid yourſelves of it; it has gained root in your fleſh; it is not by renouncing your cares, therefore, that you muſt labour towards curing yourſelves; it is by purifying yourſelves that you muſt ſanctify your cares: Every thing is pure to thoſe who are pure; otherwiſe your wound will follow you, even into the leiſure of your ſolitude; like that King of Judea mentioned in the Book of Kings, who in vain abdicated his throne, delivered up all the inſignia as well as the cares of royalty, into the hands of his ſon, and withdrew himſelf into the heart of his palace; he carried with him the leproſy with which the Lord had ſtruck him, and beheld that ſhameful diſeaſe purſue him even into his retreat. External cares find neither their innocency nor their malignity, but in our own hearts; and it is ourſelves alone who render the occupations of the world dangerous, as it is ourſelves alone who render thoſe of heaven inſipid and diſguſting.

And, behold, my brethren, the laſt reaſon why we ſhew ſo little fervour and animation in the affair of our eternal ſalvation; it is becauſe we fulfil the duties neceſſary to accompliſh it, without pleaſure, and, as it were, againſt our will. The ſlighteſt obligations of piety appear hard to us; whatever we do for heaven tires us, exhauſts us, diſpleaſes us: Prayer confines our minds too much; retirement wearies us; holy reading, from the firſt, fatigues the attention; the intercourſe of the upright is languid, and has nothing ſprightly or amuſing in it; in a word, we find ſomething, I know not what, of melancholy

choly in virtue, which occaſions us to fulfil its obligations only as hateful debts, which we always diſcharge with a bad grace, and never till we ſee ourſelves forced to it.

But, in the *firſt* place, my brethren, you are unjuſt in attributing to virtue what ſprings from your own corruption; it is not piety which is diſagreeable, it is your heart which is diſordered; it is not the cup of the Lord which is to be accuſed of bitterneſs, ſays a holy father, it is your own taſte which is vitiated. Every thing is bitter to a deceaſed palate: Correct your diſpoſitions, and the yoke will appear light to you; reſtore to your heart that taſte of which ſin has deprived it, and you will experience how pleaſing the Lord is: Hate the world, and you will comprehend how much virtue is amiable: In a word, Jeſus Chriſt once become the object of your love, you will then feel the truth of every thing I ſay.

Do the upright experience thoſe diſguſts for pious works which you feel? Interrogate them: Demand if they conſider your condition as the happieſt: They will anſwer, that in their opinion you appear worthy of compaſſion, that they are feelingly touched for your errors; to ſee you ſuffering every thing for a world which either deſpiſes you, wearies you, or cannot render you happy; to ſee you frequently running after pleaſures more inſipid to you, than even virtue from which you fly: They will tell you, that they would not change their pretended melancholy for all the felicities of the earth. Prayer conſoles them; retirement ſupports them; holy reading animates them; works of piety ſhed a holy unction through their ſoul; and their happieſt days, are thoſe which they paſs with the Lord. It is the heart which decides our pleaſures. While you

continue

continue to love the world, you will find virtue inſupportable.

In the *ſecond* place, If you wiſh to know why the yoke of Jeſus Chriſt is ſo hard, and ſo burdenſome to you; it is becauſe you carry it too ſeldom: You give only a few rapid moments to the care of your ſalvation: Certain days which you conſecrate to piety: Certain religious works of which you ſometimes acquit yourſelves; and in accompliſhing their immediate diſcharge, you experience only the diſguſts attending the firſt efforts; you do not leave to grace, the time neceſſary to lighten the weight; and you anticipate the comforts and the conſolations, which it never fails to ſhed upon the ſequel. Thoſe myſterious animals which the Philiſtines made choice of to carry the ark of the Lord beyond their frontiers, emblematic of unbelieving ſouls little accuſtomed to bear the yoke of Jeſus Chriſt, bellowed, ſays the ſcripture, and ſeemed to groan under the grandeur of that ſacred weight: In place of which, the children of Levi, a natural image of the upright, accuſtomed to that holy miniſtry, made the air reſound with ſongs of mirth and thankſgivings, while carrying it with majeſty, even over the burning ſands of the deſert. The law is not a burden to the upright ſoul accuſtomed to obſerve it; It is the worldly ſoul alone, little familiarized to the holy rules, who groans under a weight ſo pleaſing. When Jeſus Chriſt declares that his yoke is light and eaſy, he commands us, at the ſame time, to bear it every day; the unction is attached to the habit and uſage of it: The arms of Saul were heavy to David, only becauſe he was not accuſtomed to them. We muſt familiarize ourſelves with virtue, in order to be acquainted with its holy attractions; the pleaſures of ſinners are only ſuperficially agreeable:

able: The firſt moments alone are pleaſant; deſcend deeper, and you no longer find but gall and bitterneſs; and the deeper you go, the more will you find the void, the wearineſs, and the ſatiety which are inſeparable from ſin: Virtue, on the contrary, is a hidden manna; in order to taſte all its ſweetneſs, it is neceſſary to dig for it; but the more you advance, the more do its conſolations abound; in proportion as the paſſions are calmed, the path becomes eaſy; and the more will you applaud yourſelves for having broken aſunder chains which weighed you down, and which you no longer bore but with reluctance and a ſecret ſorrow.

Thus, while you confine yourſelves to ſimple eſſays in virtue, you will taſte only the repugnances and the bitterneſs of it; and, as you will not poſſeſs the fidelity of the upright, you can have no right, conſequently, to expect their conſolations.

In a word, You perform the duties of piety without inclination, not only becauſe you do them too ſeldom, but becauſe you only, as I may ſay, half perform them. You pray, but it is without recollection; you abſtain, perhaps, from injuring your enemy; but it is without loving him as your brother; you approach the holy myſteries; but without bringing there that fervour which alone can enable you to find in them thoſe ineffable comforts which they communicate to the religious ſoul; You ſometimes ſeparate yourſelves from the world; but you carry not with you into retirement the ſilence of the ſenſes and of the paſſions, without which it is only a melancholy fatigue. In a word, You only half carry the yoke. Now, Jeſus Chriſt is not divided: That Simon of Cyrene, who bore the only part of the croſs, was overcome by it, and the ſoldiers were

were under the neceſſity of uſing violence to force him to continue this melancholy office to the Saviour of the world. The fulneſs alone of the law is conſolatory; in proportion as you retrench from it, it becomes heavy and irkſome; the more you wiſh to ſoften it, the more it weighs you down; on the contrary, by ſometimes adding extraneous rigours, you feel the load diminiſhed, as if you had applied additional ſoftneſs: Whence comes this? It is, that the imperfect obſervance of the law takes its ſource from a heart which the paſſions ſtill ſhare; now, according to the word of Jeſus Chriſt, a heart divided, and which nouriſhes two loves, muſt be a kingdom and a theatre full of trouble and deſolation.

Would you wiſh a natural image of it, drawn from the holy ſcriptures? Rebecca, on the point of her delivery of Jacob and Eſau, ſuffered the moſt cruel anguiſh: The two children ſtruggled within her; and, as if worn out by her tortures, ſhe entreated of the Lord, either death or deliverance: Be not ſurpriſed, ſaid a voice from heaven to her, if your ſufferings are extreme, and that it coſts you ſo much to become a mother; the reaſon is, you carry two nations in your womb. Such is your hiſtory, my dear hearers; you are ſurpriſed that it coſts you ſo much to accompliſh a pious work; to bring forth Jeſus Chriſt; the new man in your heart: Alas! The reaſon is, that you ſtill preſerve there two loves, which are irreconcileable, Jacob and Eſau, the love of the world, and the love of Jeſus Chriſt: It is becauſe you carry within you two nations, as I may ſay, who make continual war againſt each other. If the love of Jeſus Chriſt alone poſſeſſed your heart, all there would be calm and peaceable; but you ſtill nouriſh iniquitous paſſions in it: You ſtill love the world,

the

the pleaſures and diſtinctions of fortune: You cannot endure thoſe who eclipſe you: Your heart is full of jealouſies, of animoſities, of frivolous deſires, of criminal attachments; and from thence it comes, that your ſacrifices, like thoſe of Cain, being always imperfect, like his, are always gloomy and diſagreeable.

Serve then the Lord with all your heart, and you will ſerve him with joy: Give yourſelf up to him without reſerve, without retaining the ſmalleſt right over your paſſions: Obſerve the righteouſneſſes of the law, in all their fullneſs, and they will ſhed holy pleaſures through your heart: For, thus ſays the prophet, "The ſtatutes of the "Lord are right, rejoicing the heart." Think not that the tears of penitence are always bitter and gloomy: The mourning is only external; when ſincere, they have a thouſand ſecret recompences: The upright ſoul reſembles the ſacred buſh; nothing ſtrikes your view but prickles and thorns; but you ſee not the glory of the Lord, which dwells within it: You ſee only faſtings and bodily ſufferings; but you perceive not the holy unction, which ſoothes and ſoftens them: You ſee ſilence, retirement, flight from the world and its pleaſures, but you behold not the inviſible comforter, who replaces, with ſo much uſury, the ſociety of men, now become inſupportable, ſince they have begun to taſte that of God: You ſee a life apparently gloomy and tireſome; but you are incapable of ſeeing the peace and the joy of that innocence which reigns within. It is there, that the Father of mercies, and the God of all conſolation, ſo liberally ſheds his favours, and that the ſoul, unable ſometimes to ſupport their fullneſs and exceſs, is obliged to entreat the Lord to ſuſpend the torrent of his kindneſs,

kindneſs, and to meaſure the abundance of his gifts, by the weakneſs of his creature.

Come yourſelf, my dear hearer, and make an happy experience of it; come, and put the fidelity of your God to the trial; it is here he wiſhes to be tried; come and prove whether or not we render falſe teſtimonies to his mercies; if we attract the ſinner by falſe hopes, and if his gifts are not ſtill more abundant than our promiſes. You have long tried the world; you have found it deſtitute of fidelity: it flattered you with hopes of accompliſhing every thing; pleaſures, honours, imaginary happineſs; it has deceived you; you are unhappy in it; you have never been able to attain a ſituation anſwerable to your wiſhes or expectations; come and ſee if your God will be more faithful to you; if only bitterneſs and diſguſts are to be found in his ſervice; if he promiſes more than he beſtows; if he is an ungrateful, changeable, or whimſical maſter; if his yoke is a cruel ſervitude, or a ſweet liberty: If the duties which he exacts from us, are the puniſhment of his ſlaves, or the conſolation of his children; and if he deceives thoſe who ſerve him. My God! How little wouldſt thou be worthy of our hearts, wert thou not more amiable, more faithful, and more worthy of being ſerved, than this miſerable world!

But, in order to ſerve him as he wiſhes to be ſerved, we muſt eſteem the glory and the happineſs of his ſervice; we muſt prefer this happineſs to all others, and labour in it with ſincerity, without reſerve, and with a ripe and watchful circumſpection; for if it is a common fault to want fervour in the buſineſs of our eternal ſalvation, and to become diſguſted with it; it is likewiſe a much more general one to fail of prudence, and to miſtake our path towards it.

PART

PART II.—An enterprise where the dangers are daily, and miſtakes common; where amongſt ſo many different routs which appear ſafe, there is, however, only one true and unerring, and the ſucceſs of which muſt, nevertheleſs, decide our eternal deſtiny: An enterpriſe of this nature ſurely requires uncommon exertions; and never had we occaſion, in the conduct of any other, for ſo much circumſpection and prudence. Now that ſuch is the enterpriſe of Salvation, it would be needleſs to waſte time in proving here, and equally ſo for you to doubt; the only object of importance, then, to eſtabliſh, is, the rules and the marks of this prudence, which is to guide us in ſo dangerous and ſo eſſential an affair.

The firſt rule is, Not to determine ourſelves by chance amongſt that multiplicity of ways which mankind purſue; carefully to examine all, independent of uſages and cuſtoms which may authoriſe them; in the affair of our ſalvation, to give nothing to opinion or example: The ſecond is, When we have *finally* determined, to leave nothing to the uncertainty of events, and always to prefer ſafety to danger.

Such are the common rules of prudence adopted by the children of the age, in the purſuit of their pretenſions and their temporal expectations: Eternal ſalvation is the only affair in which they are neglected. In the firſt place, No perſon examines if his ways are ſure; nor does he ever require any other pledge of his ſafety, than the crowd which he ſees marching before him. Secondly, In the doubts which ſpring up during our proceedings, the party the moſt dangerous to ſalvation, having always ſelf-love in its favour, is always preferred: Two important and common errors in

in the affair of eternal ſalvation, which it is neceſſary to combat here. The firſt rule, is, not to determine by chance, and in the affair of eternity to give nothing to opinion or example. Indeed, the upright is every where repreſented to us in the holy writings, as a judicious and prudent man; who calculates, who compares, who examines, who diſcriminates; who tries whatever may be the moſt proper; who does not lightly believe every fancy; who carries before him the torch of the law, that his ſteps may be enlightened, and that he may not be in danger of miſtaking his way. The ſinner, on the contrary, is there held out as a fooliſh man, who marches by chance, and who, in the moſt dangerous paſſes, advances forward with confidence, as if he was travelling in the ſtraighteſt and moſt certain path.

Now, my brethren, ſuch is the ſituation of almoſt all men in the affair of ſalvation. In every other matter, prudent, attentive, diffident, active to diſcover any errors concealed under the common prejudices; it is in ſalvation alone, that nothing can equal our credulity and imprudence. Yes, my brethren, We tell you every day, that the life of the world, which is to ſay, that life of amuſement, of inutility, of vanity, of ſhow, of effeminacy, exempt even from great crimes; that this life, I ſay, is not a chriſtian one, and conſequently is a life of reprobation and infidelity: It is the doctrine of that religion in which you are born; and ſince your infancy you have been nouriſhed in theſe holy truths. The world, on the contrary, affirms this to be the only life, which perſons of a certain rank can lead; that not to conform themſelves to it, would betray a barbarity of manners, in which there would be more ſingularity and meanneſs, than reaſon or virtue.

I even

I even conſent that it may ſtill be conſidered as dubious, whether the world or we have reaſon on our ſide; and that this grand diſpute may not yet be decided; nevertheleſs, as a horrible alternative depends upon it, and that any miſtake here is the worſt of all evils, it appears that prudence requires us to clear it up at leaſt, before we take the final ſtep. It is ſurely natural to heſitate between two contending parties, particularly where our ſalvation is the ſubject of diſpute: Now, I aſk you, Entering into the world, and adopting its manners, its maxims, and its cuſtoms, as you have adopted them, have you begun by examining whether it had reaſon on its ſide, and if we were wrong and falſe deceivers? The world wiſhes you to aſpire to the favours of fortune, and to neglect neither cares, exertions, meanneſſes, nor artifices to procure them; you follow theſe plans; but have you examined if the goſpel does not contradict and forbid them? The world boaſts of luxury, of magnificence, of the delicacies of the table; and in matters of expence, it deems nothing exceſſive but what may tend to derange the circumſtances: Have you informed yourſelves, whether the law of God does not preſcribe a more holy uſe of the riches which we hold only from him? The world authoriſes continual pleaſures; gaming, theatres, and treats with ridicule whoever dare venture even to doubt their innocence: Have you found this deciſion in the ſorrowful and crucifying maxims of Jeſus Chriſt?

The world approves of certain ſuſpicious and odious ways of increaſing the patrimony of our fathers, and places no other bounds to our deſires than thoſe of the laws, which puniſh violence and manifeſt injuſtice: Can you aſſure us, that the rules of the conſcience do not obſerve more narrowly, and with regard to theſe matters, do not enter

enter into diſcuſſions, which the world is totally unacquainted with? The world has declared, that a gentle, effeminate, and idle life, is an innocent life; and that virtue is not ſo rigid and auſtere as we wiſh to make it; before giving credit to this merely upon its aſſertion, have you conſulted whether the doctrine brought us by Jeſus Chriſt from heaven, ſubſcribed to the novelty, and to the danger of theſe maxims?

What, my brethren! In the affair of your eternity, without examination or attention, you adopt common prejudices, merely becauſe they are eſtabliſhed? You blindly follow thoſe who march before you, without examining where the path leads to which they keep? You even deign not to enquire at yourſelves whether or not you are deceived? You are ſatisfied in knowing that you are not the only perſons miſtaken? What! In the buſineſs which muſt decide your eternal deſtiny, you do not even make uſe of your reaſon? You demand no other pledge of your ſafety, than the general error? You have no doubt or ſuſpicion? You think it unneceſſary to inform yourſelves? You have no miſtruſt? All is good, and in your opinion as it ought to be? You who are ſo nice, ſo difficult, ſo miſtruſtful, ſo full of precaution when your worldly intereſts are in queſtion; in this grand affair alone, you conduct yourſelves by inſtinct, by fancy, by foreign impreſſions? You decide upon nothing, but, indolently, allow yourſelves to be dragged away by the multitude, and the torrent of example? You who, in every other matter, would bluſh to think like the crowd; you who pique yourſelves upon ſuperiority of genius, and upon leaving to the common people, and to weak minds, all vulgar prejudices; you who carry to ridiculous extreme, perhaps, your mode of thinking on every other point, upon

ſalvation

ſalvation alone, you think with the crowd, and it appears that reaſon is denied to you, on this grand intereſt alone. What, my brethren! When you are aſked, in the ſteps which you take to enſure ſucceſs to your worldly expectations, the reaſons which have induced you to prefer one party to another, you advance ſuch ſolid and prudent motives; you juſtify your choice by proſpects ſo certain and deciſive; you appear to have ſo maturely conſidered them, before adopting their execution; and when we demand of you whence it comes, that in the affair of your eternal ſalvation you prefer the abuſes, the cuſtoms, the maxims of the world, to the examples of the ſaints who certainly did not live like you; and to the rules of the goſpel, which condemn all thoſe who live as you do; you have nothing to anſwer, but that you are not ſingular, and that you muſt live like the reſt of the world. Great God! to what purpoſe are great abilities in the conduct of projects which will periſh with us! We have reaſons and arguments in ſupport of vanity, and we are children with regard to the truth; we pique ourſelves on our wiſdom in the affairs of the world; and, alas! in the buſineſs of our eternal ſalvation, we think it no diſgrace to be ignorant and fooliſh.

You will tell us, perhaps, that you are neither wiſer, nor more able than all the others who live like you; that you cannot enter into diſcuſſions which are beyond your reach; that were we to be believed, it would be neceſſary to cavil at, and diſpute every thing; and that piety does not conſiſt in refining to ſuch an extreme. But I aſk you, Is ſo much ſubtilty required to know that the world is a deceitful guide? That its maxims are rejected in the ſchool of Jeſus Chriſt; and that its cuſtoms can never ſubvert the law of God? Is not this the moſt ſimple and the moſt com-

mon

mon rule of the goſpel, and the firſt truth in the plan of ſalvation? To know our duty, it requires only to walk in ſimplicity of heart. Subtilties are only neceſſary in order to diſſemble with ourſelves, and to connect, if poſſible, the paſſions with the holy rules; there it is that the human mind has occaſion for all its induſtry, for the taſk is difficult: Such is exactly your caſe, you who pretend, that to recal cuſtoms to the law is a ridiculous refinement: To know our duty, it only requires conference with ourſelves. While Saul continued faithful, he had no occaſion to conſult the ſorcereſs with regard to what he ſhould do: The law of God ſufficiently inſtructed him: It was only after his guilt, that in order to calm the inquietudes of a troubled conſcience, and to connect his criminal weakneſſes with the law of God, he bethought himſelf of ſeeking, in the anſwers of a deceitful oracle, ſome authority favourable to his paſſions. Love the truth, and you will ſoon acquire a knowledge of it: A clear conſcience is the beſt of all inſtructors.

Not that I wiſh to blame thoſe ſincere reſearches which an honeſt and timid ſoul makes to enlighten and inſtruct itſelf; I wiſh only to ſay, that the majority of doubts with regard to our duties, in thoſe hearts delivered up like you to the world, ſprings from a ruling principle of cupidity, which, on the one ſide, would wiſh not to interfere with its infamous paſſions; and, on the other, have the authority of the law, to protect it from the remorſes which attend a manifeſt tranſgreſſion. For, beſides, if you ſeek the Lord in ſincerity, and your lights are inſufficient, there are ſtill prophets in Iſrael; conſult in proper time thoſe who preſerve the form of the law, and of the holy doctrine; and who teach the way of God in truth: Do not propoſe your doubts with

with thoſe colourings and ſoftenings which always fix the deciſion in your favour: Do not apply in order to be deceived, but to be inſtructed: Seek not favourable, but ſure and enlightened guides; do not content yourſelves even with the teſtimony of men: Conſult the Lord frequently, and through different channels. The voice of heaven is uniform, becauſe the voice of truth, of which it is the interpreter, is the ſame. If the teſtimonies do not accord, prefer always what places you fartheſt from danger; always miſtruſt the opinion which pleaſes, and which already had the ſuffrage of your ſelf-love. It rarely happens, that the deciſions of our inclinations are found the ſame with thoſe of the holy rules; nevertheleſs, it is that which decides on all our preferences in the buſineſs of ſalvation.—Second ſtep of our imprudence in the affair of our eternal ſalvation.—In effect, there is ſcarcely a doubt with regard to our duties, which conceals from us the preciſe obligation of the law on every ſtep: We know the paths by which Jeſus Chriſt, and the ſaints, have paſſed; they are ſtill pointed out to us every day; we are invited by the ſucceſs which they have had, to walk in their ſteps. In this manner, ſay they to us, with the Apoſtle, did thoſe men of God who have preceded us, overcome the world, and obtain the performance of the promiſes: we ſee that by imitating them, we may hope for all, and in the way in which we walk, that every thing is to be dreaded. Ought we to heſitate on this alternative? Nevertheleſs, in every thing we reſiſt our own lights; everywhere we prefer danger to ſafety; our whole life is, indeed, one continued danger; in all our actions we float, not between the more or leſs perfect, but between guilt and ſimple errors: Every time we act, the queſtion is not to know whether we are doing the greateſt good, but if we are

committing only a ſlight fault, worthy of indulgence: All our duties are limited, to the enquiry at ourſelves, if profeſſing ſuch principles; if to a certain degree, delivering ourſelves up to reſentment; if employing a certain degree of duplicity; if not denying ourſelves a certain gratification be a crime, or a venial fault; you always hang betwixt theſe two deſtinies; and your conſcience can never render you the teſtimony, that on any occaſion you made choice of the party in which there was no danger.

Thus, you know, that a life of pleaſure, of gaming, of ſhow, of amuſement, when even nothing groſs or criminal is mingled with it, is a party very doubtful for eternity; no ſaint, at leaſt, has left you ſuch an example: You are ſenſible, that more guarded and more Chriſtian manners would leave you nothing ſimilar to dread; nevertheleſs you love an accommodating doubt better than an irkſome ſafety; you know that grace has moments which never return; that nothing is more uncertain than the return of holy impulſes once rejected: that ſalvation deferred almoſt always fails; and that to begin to-day, is prudently aſſuring ourſelves of ſucceſs; you know it; yet you prefer the uncertain hope of a grace to come, to the preſent ſalvation which offers itſelf to you. Now, my brethren, I only demand of you two reflections, and I ſhall finiſh. In the firſt place, When even in this path which you tread, the balance were equal, that is to ſay, when it were equally ſuſpicious, whether you are to be ſaved or loſt; did the ſmalleſt portion of faith remain to you, you would be plunged in the moſt cruel alarms; it ought to appear horrible to you, that your eternal ſalvation was become a problem, upon which you knew not what to decide, and upon which, with equal appearances of truth, you might determine

mine for the happineſs or the miſery of your everlaſting lot, in the ſame manner as upon thoſe indifferent queſtions which God has yielded up to the controverſies of men: You ought to undertake every thing, and to employ every exertion to place appearances at leaſt, in your favour, and to find out a ſituation where prejudices would be on your ſide: And here, where every thing concludes againſt you; where the law is unfavourable; where you have nothing in your favour but ſome fallacious appearances of reaſon, upon which, you would not hazard the ſmalleſt of your temporal intereſts; and with manners which to this period have ſaved none, and in which you only ſtrengthen and comfort yourſelves by the example of thoſe who periſh with you; You are tranquil in this path: You admit of, and acknowledge the wiſdom of thoſe who have choſen a more certain one; you ſay that they are praiſe-worthy; that they are happy who can aſſume ſuch a command over themſelves; that it is much ſafer to live as they do; you ſay this, and you think it needleſs to imitate, or follow their example? Madman! cries the Apoſtle, What deluſion is it that blinds thee? and wherefore doſt thou not obey that truth which thou knoweſt? Ah! my brethren, in a choice which intereſts our glory, our advancement, our temporal intereſts, are we capable of ſuch imprudence? Of all the various ways which preſent themſelves to ambition, do we leave thoſe where every appearance ſeems favourable to our ſucceſs, and make choice of ſuch as lead to nothing; where fortune is tardy and doubtful; and which have hitherto been only productive of miſfortune? Of ſalvation alone, therefore, we make a kind of ſpeculation, if I may venture to ſpeak in this manner; that is to ſay, an undertaking without arrangement, without precaution, which we abandon to the uncertainty of

events,

events, and of which the ſucceſs can alone be expected from chance, and not from our exertions. In a word, as my laſt reflection, allow me to aſk, Why you ſearch for, and alledge to us ſo many ſpecious reaſons, as a juſtification to yourſelves, of the manner in which you live? Either you wiſh to be ſaved, or you are determined to be loſt. Do you wiſh to be ſaved? Chooſe then the moſt proper means of attaining what you aſpire to. Quit thoſe doubtful paths, by which none have hitherto been conducted to it; confine yourſelves to that which Jeſus Chriſt has pointed out to us, and which alone can ſafely lead us to it; do not apply yourſelves to leſſen in your own ſight the dangers of your own ſituation, and to view them in the moſt favourable light, in order to dread them leſs; rather magnify the danger to your mind: We cannot dread too much, what we cannot ſhun too much: And ſalvation is the only concern where precaution can never be exceſſive, becauſe a miſtake in it is without remedy. See if thoſe who once followed the ſame deceitful paths in which you tread, and who employed the ſame reaſons that you make uſe of, for their juſtification, have confined themſelves to them from the moment that grace had operated in their hearts, ſerious and ſincere deſires of ſalvation: They regarded the dangers in which you live, as incompatible with their deſign; they ſought more ſolid and certain paths; they made the holy ſafety of retirement, ſucceed to the inutility and the dangers of ſociety; the habit of prayer, to the diſſipation of gaming and amuſements; the guard of the ſenſes, to the indecency of dreſs, and the danger of public ſpectacles; Chriſtian mortification, to the ſoftneſs of an effeminate and ſenſual life; the goſpel to the world; they comprehended that it would be abſurd to wiſh their ſalvation through the ſame means by which others are loſt.

But,

But, if you are determined to periſh; alas! Why will you ſtill preſerve meaſures with religion? Why will you always ſeek to place ſome ſpecious reaſons on your ſide; to conciliate your manners with the goſpel; and to preſerve, as I may ſay, appearances ſtill with Jeſus Chriſt? Why are you only half ſinners, and ſtill leave to your groſſeſt paſſions the uſeleſs check of the law? Caſt off the remains of that yoke which is irkſome to you; and which, in leſſening your pleaſures, leſſens not your puniſhment. Why do you accompliſh your perdition with ſo much conſtraint? In place of thoſe ſcruples, which permit you only doubtful gains, and deny you ſtill certain low, and manifeſtly wicked profits, but which place you in the number of thoſe reprobates who ſhall never poſſeſs the kingdom of God; overleap theſe bounds, and no longer place any limits to your guilt, but thoſe of your cupidity: In place of thoſe looſe and worldly manners, which will equally prove your ruin, refuſe nothing to your paſſions, and, like the beaſts of the earth, yield to the gratification of every deſire, Yes, ſinners, periſh with all the fruits of iniquity, ſeeing you will equally reap tears and eternal puniſhment.

But, no, my dear hearer, we only give you theſe counſels of deſpair, in order to inſpire you with a juſt horror at them; it is a tender artifice of zeal, which only aſſumes the appearance of exhorting you to deſtruction, that you may not conſent yourſelves: alas! follow rather thoſe remains of light, which ſtill point out the truth to you at a diſtance; it is not without reaſon that the Lord has hitherto preſerved within you theſe ſeeds of ſalvation, and has not permitted all, even to the principles, to be blotted out: It is a claim which he ſtill preſerves to your heart: Take

care

care only that you found not upon this, the vain hope of a future converſion: We are not permitted to hope, till we have begun to labour. Begin, then, the grand work of your eternal ſalvation, for which, alone, the Almighty has placed you upon the earth; and on which you have never as yet beſtowed even a thought. Eſteem ſo important a care; prefer it to all others; find your only pleaſures in applying to it; examine the ſureſt and moſt proper means to ſucceed, and fix upon them, whatever they coſt, from the moment you have found them out.

Such is the prudence of the goſpel, ſo often recommended by Jeſus Chriſt; beyond that, all is vanity and error: You may poſſeſs a ſuperior mind, capable of every exertion; and rare and ſhining talents; if you err with regard to your eternal ſalvation, you are a child. Solomon, ſo eſteemed in the eaſt for his wiſdom, is a madman, whoſe folly we can now with difficulty comprehend: All worldly reaſon is but a mockery, a dazzling of the ſenſes, if it miſtakes the deciſive point of eternity: There is nothing important in life but this ſingle object; all the reſt is a dream, in which any miſtake is of little conſequence. Truſt not yourſelves, therefore, to the multitude, which is the party of thoſe who err: Take not as guides, men who can never be your ſureties; leave nothing to chance, or to the uncertainty of events; it is the height of folly where eternity is concerned; remember that there is an infinity of paths, which appear right to men, yet nevertheleſs conduct to death: That almoſt all who periſh, do it in the belief that they are in the way of ſalvation; and that all reprobates, at the laſt day, when they ſhall hear their ſentence pronounced, will be ſurpriſed, ſays the goſpel,

at

at their condemnation; becauſe they all expected the inheritance of the juſt. It is thus, that after having waited for it in this life, according to the rules of faith, you will for ever enjoy it in heaven.

Now, to God, *&c.*

SERMON

SERMON II.

ON THE SMALL NUMBER OF THE SAVED.

LUKE iv. 27.

And many Lepers were in Iſrael in the time of Eliſeus the Prophet: and none of them was cleanſed, ſaving Naaman the Syrian.

EVERY day, my brethren, you continue to demand of us, if the road to heaven is really ſo difficult, and the number of the ſaved is indeed ſo ſmall as we ſay. To a queſtion, ſo often propoſed, and ſtill oftener reſolved, our Saviour anſwers you at preſent, that there were many widows in Iſrael afflicted with famine; but the widow of Sarepta was alone found worthy the ſuccour of the Prophet Elias: That the number of lepers was great in Iſrael in the time of the Prophet Eliſeus; and that Naaman was the only one cured by the man of God.

Were I here, my brethren, for the purpoſe of alarming, rather than inſtructing you, I needed only to recapitulate what in the holy writings we find dreadful, with regard to this great truth; and running over the hiſtory of the juſt, from age to age, to ſhew you, that in all times the number of

of the ſaved has been very ſmall. The family of Noah alone ſaved from the general flood: Abraham, choſen from amongſt men, to be the ſole depoſitory of the covenant with God: Joſhua and Caleb, the only two of ſix hundred thouſand Hebrews, who ſaw the land of promiſe: Job the only upright man in the land of Uz: Lot, in Sodom. To repreſentations ſo alarming, would have ſucceeded the ſayings of the Prophets. In Iſaiah, you would ſee the elect as rare as the grapes, which are found after the vintage, and have eſcaped the ſearch of the gatherer; as rare as the blades which remain by chance in the field, and have eſcaped the ſcythe of the mower. The Evangeliſt would ſtill have added new traits to the terrors of theſe immages. I might have ſpoken to you of two roads; of which one is narrow, rugged, and the path of a very ſmall number; the other broad, open, and ſtrewed with flowers; and almoſt the general path of men. That every where, in the holy writings, the multitude is always ſpoken of, as forming the party of the reprobate; while the ſaved, compared with the reſt of mankind; form only a ſmall flock, ſcarcely perceptible to the ſight. I would have left you in fears with regard to your ſalvation; always cruel to thoſe who have not renounced faith, and every hope of being amongſt the ſaved. But what would it ſerve, to limit the fruits of this inſtruction, to the ſingle point of proving, how few perſons are ſaved? Alas! I would make the danger known, without inſtructing you how to avoid it: I would ſhew you, with the Prophet, the ſword of the wrath of God, ſuſpended over your heads, without aſſiſting you to eſcape the threatened blow: I would alarm the conſcience, without inſtructing the ſinner.

My intention is therefore to-day, in our morals and manner of life, to ſearch for the cauſe of this number being ſo

ſmall. As every one flatters himſelf he will not be excluded, it is of importance to examine if his confidence be well founded. I wiſh not, in marking to you the cauſes which render ſalvation ſo rare, to make you generally conclude, that few will be ſaved; but to bring you to aſk of yourſelves, if living as you live, you can hope to be ſo. Who am I? What is it I do for heaven; and what can be my hopes in eternity? I propoſe no other order, in a matter of ſuch importance. What are the cauſes which render ſalvation ſo rare? I mean to point out three principal ones, which is the only arrangement of this diſcourſe. Art and far-ſought reaſonings would here be ill-timed. O attend, therefore, be whom you may! No ſubject can be more worthy your attention, ſince it goes to inform you, what may be the hopes of your eternal deſtiny.

PART I. Few are ſaved; becauſe in that number we can only comprehend two deſcriptions of perſons; either thoſe who have been ſo happy as to preſerve their innocence pure and undefiled; or thoſe, who after having loſt, have regained it by penitence:—Firſt cauſe. There are only theſe two ways of ſalvation; and heaven is only open to the innocent or the penitent. Now of which party are you? Are you innocent? Are you penitent?

Nothing unclean ſhall enter the kingdom of God. We muſt conſequently carry there, either an innocence unſullied, or an innocence regained. Now, to die innocent, is a grace to which few ſouls can aſpire; and to live penitent, is a mercy, which the relaxed ſtate of our morals renders equally rare. Who indeed will pretend to ſalvation, by the claim of innocence? Where are the pure ſouls in whom ſin has

has never dwelt; and who have preſerved to the end the ſacred treaſure of grace confided to them by baptiſm, and which our Saviour will re-demand at the awful day of puniſhment?

In thoſe happy days, when the whole church was ſtill but an aſſembly of ſaints, it was very uncommon to find an inſtance of a believer, who, after having received the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and acknowledged Jeſus Chriſt in the ſacrament, which regenerates us, fell back to his former irregularities of life. Ananias and Saphira were the only prevaricators in the church of Jeruſalem; that of Corinth, had only one inceſtuous ſinner. Church penitence was then a remedy almoſt unknown; and ſcarcely was there found among theſe true Iſraelites one ſingle leper, whom they were obliged to drive from the holy altar, and ſeparate from communion with his brethren. But ſince that time, the number of the upright diminiſhes, in propertion as that of believers increaſes. It would appear, that the world, pretending now to have become almoſt generally Chriſtian, has brought with it into the Church its corruptions and its maxims. Alas! we all go aſtray, almoſt from the breaſt of our mothers! The firſt uſe which we make of our heart is a crime; our firſt deſires are paſſions; and our reaſon only expands and increaſes on the wrecks of our innocence. The earth, ſays a Prophet, is infected by the corruption of thoſe who inhabit it: All have violated the laws, changed the ordinances, and broken the alliance which ſhould have endured for ever: All commit ſin; and ſcarcely is there one to be found, who does the work of the Lord. Injuſtice, calumny, lying, treachery, adultery, and the blackeſt crimes, have deluged the earth. The brother lays ſnares for his brother; the father

ther is divided from his children; the huſband from his wife: There is no tie which a vile intereſt does not diſſolve: Good faith and probity are no longer virtues but among the ſimple people; animoſities are endleſs; reconciliations feints; and never is a former enemy regarded as a brother: They tear, they devour each other. Aſſemblies are no longer but for the purpoſe of public and general cenſure. The pureſt virtue is no longer a protection from the malignity of tongues. Gaming is become either a trade, a fraud, or a fury. Repaſts, thoſe innocent ties of ſociety, degenerate into exceſſes, of which we dare not ſpeak. Our age witneſſes horrors, with which our foreſathers were unacquainted. Behold then already one path of ſalvation ſhut to the generality of men. All have erred. Be whom you may, who liſten to me at preſent, the time has been, when ſin reigned over you: Age may perhaps have calmed your paſſions; but what was your youth? Long and habitual infirmities may perhaps have diſguſted you with the world; but what uſe did you formerly make of the vigour of your health? A ſudden inſpiration of grace may have turned your heart; but do you not moſt fervently intreat, that every moment prior to that inſpiration may be effaced from the remembrance of the Lord!

But with what am I taking up my time? We are all ſinners, O my God! And thou knoweſt our hearts: What we know of our errors, is perhaps in thy ſight the moſt pardonable; and we all allow, that by innocence, we have no claim to ſalvation. There remains, therefore, only one reſource, which is penitence. After our ſhipwreck, ſay the ſaints, it is the happy plank, which alone can conduct us into port; there is no other mean of ſalvation for us. Be whom you may, prince or ſubject, great or low, penitence

tence alone can ſave you. Now permit me to aſk, where are the penitent? You will find more, ſays a holy father, who have never fallen, than who, after their fall, have raiſed themſelves by true repentance: This is a terrible ſaying; but do not let us carry things too far; The truth is ſufficiently dreadful, without adding new terrors to it by vain declamation.

Let us only examine, if the majority of us have a right through penitence to ſalvation. What is a penitent? According to Tertullian, a penitent is a believer, who feels every moment the unhappineſs which he formerly had, to forget and loſe his God; who has his guilt inceſſantly before his eyes; who finds every where the traces and remembrance of it:

A penitent is a man, entruſted by God, with judgment againſt himſelf; who refuſes himſelf the moſt innocent pleaſures, becauſe he had formerly indulged in the moſt criminal; who puts up with the moſt neceſſary ones with pain; who now regards his body as an enemy, whom it is neceſſary to conquer; as an unclean veſſel which muſt be purified; as an unfaithful debtor, of whom it is proper to exact the laſt farthing; a penitent regards himſelf as a criminal condemned to death, becauſe he no longer is worthy of life. In the loſs of riches or health, he ſees only a privation of favours that he had formerly abuſed; in the humiliations which happen to him, but the pains of his guilt; in the agonies with which he is racked, but the commencement of thoſe puniſhments he has juſtly merited; ſuch is a penitent. But I again aſk you, where amongſt us are penitents of this deſcription? Now look around you. I do not tell you to judge your brethren, but to examine what

what are the manners and morals of thoſe who ſurround you; nor do I ſpeak of thoſe open and avowed ſinners; who have thrown off even the appearance of virtue, I ſpeak only of thoſe who like yourſelves live like the generality; and whoſe actions preſent nothing to the public view, particularly ſhameful or depraved. They are ſinners; and they admit of it: You are not innocent; and you confeſs it yourſelves. Now, are they penitent; or are you? Age, avocations, more ſerious employments, may perhaps have checked the ſallies of youth: Even the bitterneſs which the Almighty has made attendant on our paſſions; the deceits, the treacheries of the world; an injured fortune, with a ruined conſtitution, may have cooled the ardour, and confined the irregular deſires of your heart: Crimes may have diſguſted you even with crimes; for paſſions gradually extinguiſh themſelves. Time, and the natural inconſtancy of the heart, will bring theſe about; yet nevertheleſs, though detached from ſin by incapability, you are no nearer your God. According to the world, you are become more prudent, more regular, more what it calls men of probity; more exact in fulfilling your public or private duties; but you are not penitent. You have ceaſed from your diſorders; but you have not expiated them: You are not converted: This great ſtroke; this grand change of the heart, which regenerates man, has not yet been felt by you. Nevertheleſs this ſituation, ſo truly dangerous, does not alarm you; Sins, which have never been waſhed away by ſincere repentance, and conſequently never obliterated from the book of life, appear in your eyes as no longer exiſting; and you will tranquilly leave this world in a ſtate of impenitence, ſo much the more dangerous, as you will die, without being ſenſible of your danger. What I ſay here, is not merely a raſh expreſſion, or an emotion of zeal: Nothing

is

is more real, or more exactly true: It is the ſituation of almoſt all men, even the wiſeſt and moſt eſteemed by the world.

The morality of the younger ſtages in life is always lax, if not licentious. Age, diſguſt, and eſtabliſhments for life, fix the heart, and withdraw it from debauchery: but where are thoſe who are converted? Where are thoſe who expiate their crimes by tears of ſorrow, and true repentance? Where are thoſe, who having begun as ſinners, end as penitents? Shew me, in your manner of living, the ſmalleſt trace of penitence. Are your graſpings at wealth and power; your anxieties to attain the favour of the great, (and by theſe means an increaſe of employments and influence), are theſe proofs of it? Would you wiſh to reckon even your crimes as virtues? That the ſufferings of your ambition, pride, and avarice, ſhould diſcharge you from an obligation which they themſelves have impoſed? You are penitent to the world; but are you ſo to Jeſus Chriſt? The infirmities with which God afflicts you; the enemies he raiſes againſt you; the diſgraces and loſſes with which he tries you; do you receive them all as you ought, with humble ſubmiſſion to his will; and far from finding in them occaſions of penitence, do you not turn them into the objects of new crimes? It is the duty of an innocent ſoul, to receive with ſubmiſſion the chaſtiſements of the Almighty; to diſcharge, with courage, the painful duties of the ſtation allotted to him; and to be faithful to the laws of the goſpel; but do ſinners owe nothing beyond this? And yet they pretend to ſalvation; but upon what claim? To ſay that you are innocent before God, your own conſcience will bear teſtimony againſt you. To endeavour to perſuade yourſelves that you are penitent, you dare not; and you would

would condemn yourſelves through your own mouths. Upon what then doſt thou depend, O man! who thus liveſt ſo tranquil?

And what renders it ſtill more dreadful is, that acting in this manner, you only follow the torrent: Your morals are the morals of almoſt all men. You may, perhaps, be acquainted with ſome ſtill more guilty, (for I ſuppoſe you to have ſtill ſome ſentiments of religion, and regard for your ſalvation); but do you know any real penitents? I am afraid we muſt ſearch the deſerts and ſolitudes for them. You can ſcarcely particulariſe among perſons of rank and uſage of the world, a ſmall number whoſe morals and mode of life more auſtere and more guarded than the generality, attract the attention, and very likely the cenſure of the public: All the reſt walk in the ſame path. I ſee clearly that every one comforts himſelf by the example of his neighbour: That in that point, children ſucceed to the falſe ſecurity of their fathers; that none live innocent; that none die penitent: I ſee it; and I cry, O God! If thou haſt not deceived us; if all thou haſt told us with regard to the road to eternal life, ſhall be fulfilled to a point; if the number of thoſe who muſt periſh, ſhall not influence THEE to abate from the ſeverity of thy laws, what will become of that immenſe multitude of creatures which every hour diſappears from the face of the earth? Where are our friends, our relations who have gone before us; and what is their lot in the eternal regions of death? What ſhall we ourſelves be one day? When formerly a Prophet complained to the Lord, that all Iſrael had forſaken his protection; He replied, that ſeven thouſand ſtill remained, who had not bowed the knee to Baal: Behold the number of pure and faithful ſouls which a whole kingdom then contained.

But

But couldeſt thou ſtill, O my God! comfort the anguiſh of thy ſervants to-day by the ſame aſſurance? I know that thine eye diſcerns ſtill ſome upright amongſt us; that the prieſthood has ſtill its Phineas'; the magiſtracy its Samuels; the ſword its Joſhuas; the Court its Daniels, its Eſthers, and its Davids; for the world only exiſts for thy choſen; and all would periſh were the number accompliſhed: But thoſe happy remains of the children of Iſrael who ſhall inherit ſalvation, what are they, compared to the grains of ſand in the ſea; I mean to that number of ſinners who combat for their own deſtruction? You come after this, my brethren, to enquire if it be true, that few ſhall be ſaved. Thou haſt ſaid it, O my God! and conſequently it is a truth which will endure for ever.

But, even admitting that the Almighty had not ſpoken thus, I would wiſh, in the ſecond place, to review, for an inſtant, what paſſes among men: The laws by which they are governed: The maxims by which the multitude is regulated: This is the ſecond cauſe of the paucity of the ſaved; and, properly ſpeaking, is only a developement of the firſt: The force of habit and cuſtoms.

PART II. Few people are ſaved, becauſe the maxims moſt univerſally received in all countries, and upon which depend, in general, the morals of the multitude, are incompatible with ſalvation. The rules laid down, approved, and authoriſed by the world, with regard to the application of wealth, the love of glory, Chriſtian moderation, and the duties of offices and conditions, are diametrically oppoſite to thoſe of the Evangeliſts; and conſequently can lead only to death. I ſhall not, at preſent, enter into a detail too extended for a diſcourſe, and too little ſerious, perhaps, for Chriſtians.

I need not tell you, that it is an eſtabliſhed cuſtom in the world, to allow the liberty of proportioning expences to rank and wealth; and provided it is a patrimony we inherit from our anceſtors, we may diſtinguiſh ourſelves by the uſe of it, without reſtraint to our luxury, or without regard in our profuſion, to any thing but our pride and caprice.

But Chriſtian moderation has its rules: We are not the abſolute maſters of our riches; nor are we entitled to abuſe what the Almighty has beſtowed upon us for better purpoſes: Above all, while thouſands of unfortunate wretches languiſh in poverty, whatever we make uſe of beyond the wants and neceſſary expences of our ſtation, is an inhumanity to, and a theft from the poor. Theſe are refinements of devotion, ſay they; and in matters of expence and profuſion nothing is exceſſive or blameable, according to the world, but what may tend to derange the fortune. I need not tell you, that it is an approved cuſtom, to decide our lots, and to regulate our choice of profeſſions or ſituations in life, by the order of our birth, or the intereſts of fortune. But, O my God! does the miniſtry of thy goſpel derive its ſource from the worldly conſiderations of a carnal birth? We cannot eſtabliſh all, ſays the world, and it would be melancholy to ſee perſons of rank and birth in avocations unworthy of their dignity. If born to a name diſtinguiſhed in the world, you muſt get forward by dint of intrigue, meanneſs, and expence: Make fortune your idol. That ambition, however much condemned by the laws of the goſpel, is only a ſentiment worthy your name and birth.

You are of a ſex and rank which introduce you to the gaities of the world: You cannot but do as others do: You

You muſt frequent all the publit places, where thoſe of your age and rank aſſemble; enter into the ſame pleaſures; paſs your days in the ſame frivolities; and expoſe yourſelf to the ſame dangers; theſe are the received maxims; and you are not made to reform them: Such is the doctrine of the world.

Now permit me to aſk you here; Who confirms you in theſe ways? By what rules are they juſtified to your mind? Who authoriſes you in this diſſipation, which is neither agreeable to the title you have received by baptiſm, nor perhaps to thoſe you hold from your anceſtors? Who authoriſes thoſe public pleaſures, which you only think innocent, becauſe your ſoul, already too familiarized with ſin, feels no longer the dangerous impreſſions or tendency of them? Who authoriſes you to lead an effeminate and ſenſual life, without virtue, ſufferance, or any religious exerciſe? To live like a ſtranger in the midſt of your own family, diſdaining to inform yourſelf with regard to the morals of thoſe dependent upon you! Through an affected ſtate, to be ignorant whether they believe in the ſame God; whether they fulfil the duties of the religion you profeſs? Who authoriſes you in maxims ſo little Chriſtian? Is it the goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt? Is it the doctrine of the Apoſtles and ſaints? For ſurely ſome rule is neceſſary to aſſure us that we are in ſafety: What is yours? Cuſtom: That is the only reply you can make. We ſee none around us, but what conduct themſelves in the ſame way and by the ſame rule. Entering into the world, we find the manners already eſtabliſhed: Our fathers lived thus, and from them we copy our cuſtoms: The wiſeſt conform to them: An individual cannot be wiſer than the whole world, and muſt not pretend to make himſelf ſingular, by acting contrary

trary to the general voice. Such, my brethren, are your only comforters againſt all the terrors of religion: None act up to the law. The public example is the only guarantee of our morals. We never reflect, that, as the Holy Spirit ſays, the laws of the people are vain: That our Saviour has left us rules, in which neither times, ages, nor cuſtoms, can ever authoriſe the ſmalleſt change: That the heavens and the earth ſhall paſs away; that cuſtoms and manners ſhall change; but that the Divine laws will everlaſtingly be the ſame.

We content ourſelves with looking around us: We do not reflect, that what at preſent we call cuſtom, would, in former times, before the morals of Chriſtians became degenerated, have been regarded as monſtrous ſingularities; and, if corruption has gained ſince that period, theſe vices, though they have loſt their ſingularity, have not loſt their guilt. We do not reflect, that we ſhall be judged by the goſpel, and not by cuſtom; by the examples of the holy, and not by mens opinions; that the habits, which are only eſtabliſhed among believers by the relaxation of faith, are abuſes we are to lament, not examples we are to follow: That in changing the manners, they have not changed our duties: that the common and general example which authoriſes them, only proves that virtue is rare, but not that profligacy is permitted: In a word, that piety and a real Chriſtian life are too unpalatable to our depraved nature, ever to be practiſed by the majority of men. Come now and ſay, that you only do as others do: It is exactly by that you condemn yourſelves. What! the moſt terrible certainty of your condemnation, ſhall become the only motive for your confidence! Which, according to the Scriptures, is the road that conducts to death? Is it not that

that which the majority purſues? Which is the party of the reprobate? Is it not the multitude? You do nothing but what others do: But thus, in the time of Noah, periſhed all who were buried under the waters of the Deluge: All who, in the time of Nebuchadnezzar, proſtrated themſelves before the golden calf: All who, in the time of Elijah, bowed the knee to Baal: All who, in the time of Eleazar, abandoned the law of their fathers. You only do what others do; but that is exactly what the Scriptures forbid: Do not, ſay they, conform yourſelves to this corrupted age: Now, the corrupted age means not the ſmall number of juſt, whom you endeavour not to imitate; it means the multitude whom you follow. You only do what others do: You will conſequently experience the ſame lot. Now, "Miſery to thee, (cried formerly St. Auguſtine,) fatal torrent of human cuſtoms; wilt thou never ſuſpend thy courſe? To the end wilt thou drag in the children of Adam to thine immenſe and terrible abyſs?"

In place of ſaying to ourſelves, "What are my hopes? In the church of Jeſus Chriſt there are two roads; one broad and open, by which almoſt the whole world paſſes, and which leads to death; the other narrow, where few indeed enter, and which conducts to life eternal; In which of theſe am I? Are my morals the uſual ones of perſons of my rank, age, and ſituation in life? Am I with the great number? Then I am not in the right path: I am loſing myſelf: The great number in every ſtation is not the party of the ſaved." Far from reaſoning in this manner, we ſay to ourſelves, "I am not in a worſe ſtate than others; thoſe of my rank and age live as I do: Why ſhould I not live like them?" Why, my dear hearer? For that very reaſon: The general mode of living cannot be

be that of a Chriſtian life: In all ages, the holy have been remarkable and ſingular men: Their manners were always different from thoſe of the world; and they have only been ſaints, becauſe their lives had no ſimilarity to thoſe of the reſt of mankind. In the time of Eſdras, in ſpite of the defence againſt it, the cuſtom prevailed of intermarrying with ſtranger women: This abuſe became general: The prieſts and the people no longer made any ſcruple of it: But what did this holy reſtorer of the law; or did he follow the example of his brethren? Did he believe that guilt, in becoming general, became more legitimate? No. He recalled the people to a ſenſe of the abuſe: He took the book of the law in his hand, and explaining it to the affrighted people, corrected the cuſtom by the truth. Follow, from age to age, the hiſtory of the juſt; and ſee if Lot conformed himſelf to the habits of Sodom, or if nothing diſtinguiſhed him from the other inhabitants: If Abraham lived like the reſt of his age: If Job reſembled the other princes of his nation: If Eſther conducted herſelf in the court of Ahaſuerus like the other women of that Prince: If many widows in Iſrael reſembled Judith: If, among the children of the captivity, it is not ſaid of Tobias alone, that he copied not the conduct of his brethren; and that he even fled from the danger of their commerce and ſociety. See, if in thoſe happy ages, when Chriſtians were all ſaints, they did not ſhine like ſtars in the midſt of the corrupted nations; and if they ſerved not as a ſpectacle to angels and men, by the ſingularity of their lives and manners: If the Pagans did not reproach them for their retirement, and ſhunning of all public theatres, places, and pleaſures: If they did not complain that the Chriſtians affected to diſtinguiſh themſelves in every thing from their fellow-citizens; to form a ſeparate people in the midſt of the

the people; to have their particular laws and cuſtoms; and if a man from their ſide embraced the party of the Chriſtians, they did not conſider him as for ever loſt to their pleaſures, aſſemblies, and cuſtoms: In a word, ſee, if in all ages, the ſaints whoſe lives and actions have been tranſmitted down to us, have reſembled the reſt of mankind.

You will perhaps tell us, that all theſe are ſingularities and exceptions, rather than rules which the world is obliged to follow: They are exceptions, it is true; but the reaſon is, that the general rule is to throw away ſalvation; that a religious and pious ſoul in the midſt of the world, is always a ſingularity approaching to a miracle. The whole world, you ſay, is not obliged to follow theſe examples; but is not piety the general duty of all? To be ſaved, muſt we not be holy? Muſt heaven, with difficulty and ſufferance, be gained by ſome; while with eaſe by others? Have you any other goſpel to follow; other duties to fulfil; other promiſes to hope for, than thoſe of the Holy Bible? Ah! Since there was another way more eaſy to arrive at ſalvation, wherefore, ye pious Chriſtians, who at this moment enjoy in heaven, that kingdom, gained with toil, and at the expence of your blood, did ye leave us examples ſo dangerous and uſeleſs?

Wherefore have ye opened for us a road, rugged, diſagreeable, and calculated to repreſs our ardour, ſeeing there was another you could have pointed out, more eaſy, and more likely to attract us, by facilitating our progreſs? Great God! how little does mankind conſult reaſon in the point of eternal ſalvation!

Will you conſole yourſelves after this with the multitude, as if the greatneſs of the number could render the guilt unpuniſhed

puniſhed, and the Almighty durſt not condemn all thoſe who live like you? But what are all creatures in the ſight of God? Did the multitude of the guilty prevent him from deſtroying all fleſh at the Deluge? From making fire from heaven deſcend upon the five iniquitous cities? From burying in the waters of the Red Sea, Pharaoh and all his army? From ſtriking with death all who murmured in the deſert? Ah! The kings of the earth may have regard to the number of the guilty, becauſe the puniſhment becomes impoſſible, or at leaſt dangerous, when the fault is become general. But God, who wipes the impious, ſays Job, from off the face of the earth, as one wipes the duſt from off a garment; God, in whoſe ſight all people and nations are as if they were not, numbers not the guilty: He has regard only to the crimes; and all that the weak and miſerable ſinner can expect from his unhappy accomplices, is to have them as companions in his miſery. So few are ſaved; becauſe the maxims moſt univerſally adopted, are maxims of ſin: So few are ſaved, becauſe the maxims and duties moſt univerſally unknown, or rejected, are thoſe moſt indiſpenſable to ſalvation. Laſt reflection, which is indeed nothing more than the proof, and the explanation of the former ones.

What are the engagements of the holy vocation to which we have all been called? The ſolemn promiſes of baptiſm. What have we promiſed at baptiſm? To renounce the world, the devil, and the fleſh: Theſe are our vows: This is the ſituation of the Chriſtian: Theſe are the eſſential conditions of our covenant with God, by which eternal life has been promiſed to us. Theſe truths appear familiar, and deſtined for the common people; but it is a miſtake: Nothing can be more ſublime; and alas! nothing is more generally unknown: It is at the court of kings, and to the

the princes of the earth, that without ceaſing we ought to announce them. Alas! They are well inſtructed in all the affairs of the world, while the firſt principles of Chriſtian morality are frequently more unknown to them than to humble and ſimple hearts. At your baptiſm, you have then renounced the world. It is a promiſe you have made to God, before the holy altar; the Church has been the guarantee and depoſitory of it; and you have only been admitted into the number of believers, and marked with the undefeaſible ſeal of ſalvation, upon the faith that you have ſworn to the Lord, to love neither the world, nor what the world loves. Had you then anſwered what you now repeat every day, that you find not the world ſo black and pernicious as we ſay; that after all it may innocently be loved; and that we only decry it ſo much, becauſe we do not know it; and ſince you are to live in the world, you wiſh to live like thoſe who are in it: Had you anſwered thus, the Church would not have received you into its boſom; would not have connected you with the hope of Chriſtians, nor joined you in communion with thoſe who have overcome the world: She would have adviſed you to go and live with thoſe infidels who know not our Saviour. For this reaſon it was, that, in former ages, thoſe of the Catechumen, who could not prevail upon themſelves to renounce the world and its pleaſures, put off their baptiſm till death; and durſt not approach the holy altar, to contract by the ſacrament, which regenerates us, engagements of which they knew the importance and ſanctity; and to fulfil which, they felt themſelves ſtill unqualified. You are therefore required, by the moſt ſacred of all vows, to hate the world; that is to ſay, not to conform yourſelves to it: If you love it, if you follow its pleaſures and cuſtoms, you are not only, as St. John ſays, the enemy of

God, but you likewiſe renounce the faith given in baptiſm: You abjure the goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt: You are an apoſtate from religion, and trample under foot the moſt ſacred and irrevocable vows that man can make. Now, what is this world which you ought to hate? I have only to anſwer, that it is the one you love: You will never miſtake it by this mark: This world is a ſociety of ſinners; whoſe deſires, fears, hopes, cares, projects, joys, and chagrins, no longer turn but upon the ſucceſſes or misfortunes of this life. This world is an aſſemblage of people, who look upon the earth as their country; the time to come as an exilement; the promiſes of faith as a dream; and death as the greateſt of all misfortunes. This world is a temporal kingdom, where our Saviour is unknown; where thoſe acquainted with his name glorify him not as their Lord; hate his maxims; deſpiſe his followers; and neglect or inſult him in his ſacraments and worſhip. In a word, to give a proper idea at once of this world, it is the great number; behold the world, which you ought to ſhun, hate, and combat againſt by your example,

Now is this your ſituation with regard to the world? Are its pleaſures a fatigue to you; do its exceſſes afflict you; do you regret the length of your pilgrimage here? Are not its laws your laws? Its maxims your maxims? What it condemns, do you not condemn? Do you not approve what it approves? And ſhould it happen, that you alone were left upon the earth, may we not ſay, that the corrupted world would be revived in you; and that you would leave an exact model of it to your poſterity? When I ſay you, I mean and addreſs myſelf to almoſt all men.

Where

Where are thoſe who ſincerely renounce the pleaſures, habits, maxims, and hopes of this world? We find many who complain of it; and accuſe it of injuſtice, ingratitude and caprice; who ſpeak warmly of its abuſes and errors; but in decrying, they continue to love, to follow it; they cannot bring themſelves to do without it; in complaining of its injuſtice, they are only piqued at it, they are not undeceived; they feel its hard treatment, but they are unacquainted with its dangers; they cenſure, but where are thoſe who hate it? And now, my brethren, you may judge, if many can have a claim to ſalvation.

In the ſecond place, you have renounced the fleſh at your baptiſm; that is to ſay, you are engaged not to live according to the ſenſual appetites; to regard even indolence and effeminacy as crimes; not to flatter the corrupted deſires of the fleſh; but to chaſtiſe, cruſh, and crucify it. This is not an acquired perfection; it is a vow; it is the firſt of all duties; the character of a true Chriſtian, and inſeparable from faith. In a word, you have anathematized Satan and all his works: And what are his works? That which compoſes almoſt the thread and end of your life; pomp, pleaſure, luxury, and diſſipation: Lying, of which he is the father; pride, of which he is the model; jealouſy and contention, of which he is the artiſan: But I aſk you, where are thoſe who have not withdrawn the anathema they had pronounced againſt Satan? Now conſequently, (to mention it as we go along), behold many of the queſtions anſwered.

You continually demand of us, if theatres and other public places of amuſement, be innocent recreations for Chriſtians. In return, I have only one queſtion to aſk you,

you. Are they the works of Satan, or of Jeſus Chriſt? For there can be no medium in religion. I mean not to ſay, but what many recreations and amuſements may be termed indifferent: But the moſt indifferent pleaſures which religion allows, and which the weakneſs of our nature renders even neceſſary, belong in one ſenſe to Jeſus Chriſt, by the facility with which they ought to enable us to apply ourſelves to more holy and more ſerious duties. Every thing we do; every thing we rejoice or weep at, ought to be of ſuch a nature, as to have a connection with Jeſus Chriſt, and to be done for his glory. Now, upon this principle, the moſt inconteſtible, and moſt univerſally allowed in Chriſtian morality, you have only to decide whether you can connect the glory of Jeſus Chriſt with the pleaſures of a theatre. Can our Saviour have any part in ſuch a ſpecies of recreation? And before you enter them, can you, with confidence, declare to him, that in ſo doing, you only propoſe his glory, and to enjoy the ſatisfaction of pleaſing him? What! The theatres, ſuch as they are at preſent, ſtill more criminal, by the public licentiouſneſs of thoſe unfortunate creatures who mount them, than by the impure and paſſionate ſcenes they repreſent: The theatres are the works of Jeſus Chriſt! Jeſus Chriſt would animate a mouth, from whence are to proceed ſounds, laſcivious, and intended to corrupt the heart? But theſe blaſphemies ſtrike me with horror. Jeſus Chriſt would preſide in aſſemblies of ſin, where every thing we hear weakens his doctrines; where the poiſon enters into the ſoul by all the ſenſes; where every art is employed to inſpire, awaken, and juſtify the paſſions he condemns? Now, ſays Tertullian. if they are not the works of Jeſus Chriſt, they muſt be the works of Satan: Every Chriſtian ought, therefore, to abſtain from them: When he partakes

takes of them, he violates the vows of baptiſm: However innocent he may flatter himſelf to be, in bringing from theſe places an untainted heart, it is ſullied by being there; ſince by his preſence alone he has participated in the works of Satan, which he had renounced at baptiſm, and violated the moſt ſacred promiſes he had made to Jeſus Chriſt and to his Church.

Theſe, my brethren, as I have already told you, are not merely advices, and pious arts; they are the moſt eſſential of our obligations: But alas! who fulfils them? who even knows them? Ah! my brethren, did you know how far the title you bear, of Chriſtian, engages you; could you comprehend the ſanctity of your ſtate; the hatred of the world, of yourſelf, and of every thing, which is not of God, that it ordains you; that life, according to the Goſpel, that continual watching, that guard over the paſſions: in a word, that conformity with Jeſus Chriſt crucified, which it exacts of you: could you comprehend it; could you remember, that as you ought to love God with all your heart, and all your ſtrength, a ſingle deſire that has not connection with him defiles you, you would appear a monſter in your own ſight. How! would you ſay to yourſelf, duties ſo holy, and morals ſo prophane! A vigilance ſo continual, and a life ſo careleſs and diſſipated! A love of God ſo pure, ſo complete, ſo univerſal, and a heart the continual prey of a thouſand impulſes, either foreign or criminal: If thus it is, who, O my God! will be entitled to ſalvation?

Few indeed, I am afraid, my dear hearer: at leaſt it will not be you, (unleſs a change takes place,) nor thoſe who reſemble you: it will not be the multitude. Who ſhall be

preſent: And from what would be your deſtiny, were you to be judged this moment, you may almoſt decide upon what will take place at your departure from life. Now I aſk you, (and connecting my own lot with yours, I aſk it with dread,) were Jeſus Chriſt to appear in this temple, in the midſt of this aſſembly, to judge us, to make the dreadful ſeparation betwixt the goats and ſheep, do you believe that the greateſt number of us would be placed at his right hand? Do you believe that the number would at leaſt be equal? Do you believe there would even be found ten upright and faithful ſervants of the Lord, when formerly five cities could not furniſh ſo many? I aſk you. You know not: and I know it not. Thou alone, O my God! knoweſt who belong to thee.

But if we know not who belong to him, at leaſt we know that ſinners do not. Now, who are the juſt and faithful, aſſembled here at preſent? Titles and dignities avail nothing: You are ſtripped of all theſe in the preſence of your Saviour: Who are they? Many ſinners, who wiſh not to be converted; many more who wiſh, but always put it off; many others, who are only converted in appearance, and again fall back to their former courſes: In a word, a great number, who flatter themſelves they have no occaſion for converſion: This is the party of the reprobate. Ah! my brethren, cut off from this aſſembly theſe four claſſes of ſinners, for they will be cut off at the great day: And now appear, ye juſt: Where are ye? O God! where are thy choſen? And what a portion remains to thy ſhare!

My brethren, our ruin is almoſt certain; yet we think not of it. When even in this terrible ſeparation, which will

will one day take place, there ſhould be only one ſinner in this aſſembly, on the ſide of the reprobate; and that a voice from heaven ſhould aſſure us of it, without particulariſing him: Who of us would not tremble, leaſt he ſhould be the unfortunate and devoted wretch? Who of us would not immediately apply to his conſcience, to examine if his crimes merited not this puniſhment? Who of us, ſeized with dread, would not demand of our Saviour, as the Apoſtles formerly did, and ſay, "Lord, is it I?" And ſhould a ſmall reſpite be allowed to our prayers, who of us would not uſe every effort, by tears, ſupplications, and ſincere repentance, to avert the misfortune? Are we in our ſenſes, my dear hearers? Perhaps, among all who liſten to me, ten juſt would not be found; perhaps fewer: What do I know, O my God! I dare not with a fixed eye regard the depths of thy judgments and thy juſtice. More than one perhaps would not be found amongſt us all. And this danger affects you not, my dear hearer? You perſuade yourſelf, that in this great number who ſhall periſh, you will be the happy individual; you, who have leſs reaſon perhaps than any other to believe it; you upon whom alone the ſentence of death ſhould fall, were only one of all who hear me, to ſuffer? Great God! How little are the terrors of thy law known to the world! In all ages, the juſt have ſhuddered with dread, in reflecting on the ſeverity and extent of thy judgments upon the deſtinies of men: Alas! What do they prepare for the children of Adam!

But what are we to conclude from theſe grand truths? That all muſt deſpair of ſalvation? God forbid: The impious alone, to quiet his own feelings in his debaucheries, endeavours to perſuade himſelf, that all men ſhall periſh as well as he.

This idea ought not to be the fruit of the preſent diſcourſe. It is meant to undeceive you with regard to the general error, that any one may do whatever others do; to convince you, that in order to merit ſalvation, you muſt diſtinguiſh yourſelves from the reſt; in the midſt of the world, lead a life to the glory of God, and reſemble not the multitude.

When the Jews were led in captivity from Judea to Babylon, a little before they quitted their own country, the Prophet Jeremiah, whom the Lord had forbid to leave Jeruſalem, ſpoke thus to them: "Children of Iſrael, when "you ſhall arrive at Babylon, you will behold the inhabi- "tants of that country, who carry upon their ſhoulders "gods of ſilver and gold: All the people will proſtrate "themſelves, and adore them. But you, far from allowing "yourſelves by theſe examples, to be led to impiety, ſay "to yourſelves in ſecret, It is thou, O Lord! whom we "ought to adore."

Let me now finiſh, by addreſſing to you the ſame words:

At your departure from this temple, you go to enter into another Babylon: You go to ſee idols of gold and ſilver, before which all men proſtrate themſelves: You go to regain the vain objects of human paſſions, wealth, glory, and pleaſure, which are the gods of this world, and which almoſt all men adore: You will ſee thoſe abuſes, which all the world permits; thoſe errors, which cuſtom authoriſes; and thoſe debaucheries, which an infamous faſhion has almoſt conſtituted as laws. Then, my dear hearer, if you wiſh to be of the ſmall number of true Iſraelites, ſay in the ſecrecy of your heart, It is thou alone, O my God! whom we ought to adore. I wiſh not to have connection

with

with a people, which knows thee not: I will have no other law than thy holy law: the gods, which this fooliſh multitude adores, are not gods: they are the work of the hands of men; they will periſh with them: Thou alone, O my God! art immortal; and thou alone deſerveſt to be adored. The cuſtoms of Babylon have no connection with the holy laws of Jeruſalem: I will continue to worſhip thee with that ſmall number of the children of Abraham, which ſtill in the midſt of an infidel nation compoſes thy people: With them, I will turn all my deſires towards the Holy Sion: The ſingularity of my manners will be regarded as a weakneſs; but bleſſed weakneſs, O my God! which will give me ſtrength to reſiſt the torrent of cuſtoms, and the ſeduction of example: Thou wilt be my God in the midſt of Babylon, as thou wilt one day be in Jeruſalem.

Ah! The time of the captivity will at laſt expire: Thou wilt call to thy remembrance, Abraham and David: Thou wilt deliver thy people: Thou wilt tranſport us to the holy city: Then wilt thou alone reign over Iſrael, and over the nations which at preſent know thee not. All being deſtroyed; all the empires and ſceptres of the earth; all the monuments of human pride annihilated; and thou alone remaining eternal, we then ſhall know, that thou art the Lord of hoſts, and the only God to be adored.

Behold the fruit which you ought to reap from this diſcourſe; live apart; think without ceaſing, that the great number work their own deſtruction: Regard, as nothing, all cuſtoms of the earth, unleſs authoriſed by the law of God: and remember, that holy men have in all ages been always looked upon as ſingular.

It

It is thus, that after diſtinguiſhing yourſelves from the ſinful on earth, you will be glorioufly ſeparated from them in eternity,

Now to God the Father, &c.

SERMON

SERMON III.

THE DISGUSTS ACCOMPANYING VIRTUE.

JOHN x. 31.

Then the Jews took up ſtones again, to ſtone him.

BEHOLD then, my brethren, the marks of gratitude which Jeſus Chriſt receives from men; behold the conſolations which Heaven prepares for him in the painful exerciſe of his miniſtry. There he is treated as a Samaritan, and poſſeſſed by the devil: Here they take up ſtones to ſtone him. It is thus that the Son of God has paſſed all the time of his mortal life, continually expoſed to the moſt obſtinate contradiction, finding only hearts inſenſible to his kindneſſes, and rebellious to the truths which he announced to them, yet never did he allow the ſmalleſt ſign of impatience, or the leaſt complaint to eſcape him.

And we, my brethren, we, his members and his diſciples; alas! the ſmalleſt diſguſts, the ſmalleſt contradictions we experience in the practice of virtue, revolt our delicacy; from the moment we ceaſe to reliſh thoſe attractions, that ſenſibility which ſoftens every thing to be found painful in duty, there is nothing but complaint and murmurs; troubled, diſcouraged, we are tempted almoſt to abandon God,

God, and to return to the world, as a more agreeable and commodious maſter: In a word, we would wiſh to find nothing in the ſervice of God, but pleaſure and conſolation.

But our divine Maſter, in calling us to his ſervice, has he not declared, in expreſs terms, that the kingdom of heaven is only to be gained by conqueſt; and that none but thoſe who do violence upon themſelves, can force it? And what do theſe words ſignify? Unleſs, that entering into the ſervice of God, we are not to promiſe ourſelves, that we ſhall always find in it a certain ſweetneſs, a certain reliſh, which deprives it of all pain, and cauſes it to be loved; on the contrary, it is almoſt certain, that in it we ſhall experience diſguſts, and contradictions which will exerciſe our patience, and put our fidelity to frequent trials; that we ſhall often feel the weight of the yoke, without feeling the unction of grace, which renders it light and eaſy; becauſe piety eſſentially oppoſes the gratification of our former taſtes, and original inclinations, for which, we always preſerve ſome unhappy remains of tenderneſs, and which we cannot mortify, without making the heart ſuffer; that beſides, we ſhall have to undergo the eternal caprices of an inconſtant and volatile heart, ſo difficult to fix, that without reaſon or foundation, it is diſguſted in a moment with what it formerly loved moſt. Behold, my brethren, what we ought to have expected, when we embraced the cauſe of virtue: Here, it is the time of combat and trials; peace and felicity are only for heaven; but notwithſtanding this, I ſay, that it is unjuſt to form the diſagreeable circumſtances which may accompany virtue in this life, a pretext either to abandon God when we have begun to ſerve him; or to be afraid to ſerve him, when we have begun to know him.

Behold

Behold my reaſons: In the firſt place, becauſe diſguſts are inevitable in this life: Secondly, becauſe thoſe of piety are not ſo bitter as we imagine them to be: Thirdly, becauſe they are leſs ſo than thoſe of the world: Fourthly, becauſe, were they equally ſo, they yet poſſeſs reſources which thoſe of the world have not. Let us inveſtigate theſe edifying truths, and implore the aſſiſtance of divine grace towards their proper explanation.

REFLECTION I. I ſay, in the firſt place, becauſe diſguſts are inevitable in this life. Alas! We complain, that the ſervice of God diſguſts us; but ſuch is the condition of this miſerable life. Man born fully to enjoy God, cannot be happy here below, where he never but imperfectly poſſeſs him; diſguſts are a neceſſary conſequence of the inquietude of a heart which is out of its place, and is unable to find it on the earth; which ſeeks to fix itſelf, but cannot with all the created beings which ſurround it; which, diſguſted with every thing elſe, attaches itſelf to God; but being unable to poſſeſs him as fully as it is capable of doing, feels always that ſomething is wanting to its happineſs; agitates itſelf, in order to attain it, but can never completely reach it here; finds in virtue almoſt the ſame void and the ſame diſguſts it had found in ſin; becauſe, to whatever degree of grace it may may be exalted, there ſtill remains much to accompliſh before it can arrive at that fulneſs of righteouſneſs and love, which will poſſeſs our whole heart; will fill all our deſires; extinguiſh all our paſſions; occupy all our thoughts; and which we can never find but in heaven.

Were it poſſible to be happy in this world, we ſhould undoubtedly be ſo in ſerving God; becauſe grace calms our paſſions; moderates our deſires, conſoles our ſufferings, and gives us a foretaſte of that perfect happineſs we expect

expect; and which we ſhall not enjoy, but in a bleſſed immortality. Of all the ſituations in which man can find himſelf in this life, that of righteouſneſs undoubtedly brings him neareſt to felicity; but as it always leaves him in the path which conducts to it, it leaves him likewiſe ſtill uneaſy, and in one ſenſe miſerable.

We are therefore unjuſt to complain of the diſguſts which accompany virtue. Did the world make its followers happy, we ſhould then have reaſon to be diſſatisfied, at not being ſo in the ſervice of God: We might then accuſe him of uſing his ſervants ill; of depriving them of an happineſs which is due to them alone; that far from attracting, he rejects them; and that the world is preferable to him, as a more conſoling and faithful maſter. But examine all ſtations; interrogate all ſinners; conſult in rotation the partizans of all the different pleaſures which the world promiſes, and the different paſſions which it inſpires; the envious, the ambitious, the voluptuous, the indolent, the revengeful; none are happy; each complains; no one is in his place; every condition has its inconveniencies; and ſorrows are attached to every ſtation in life: The world is the habitation of the diſcontented; and the diſguſts which accompany virtue, are much more a conſequence of the condition of this mortal life, than any imperfection in virtue itſelf.

Beſides, the Almighty has his reaſons for leaving the moſt upright ſouls below in a ſtate, in ſome reſpects, always violent and diſagreeable to nature: By that, he wiſhes to diſguſt us with this miſerable life; to make us long for our deliverance, and for that immortal country, where nothing ſhall more be wanting to our happineſs.

I feel

I feel within me (ſays the Apoſtle) a fatal law in oppoſition to the law of God; the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now, if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but ſin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is preſent with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I ſee another law in my members, warring againſt the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of ſin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who ſhall deliver me from the body of this death? Behold the moſt natural effect which the diſguſts attached to virtue ought to operate in a Chriſtian heart: Hatred of ourſelves; contempt of the preſent life; a deſire for eternal riches; an eager anxiety to go and enjoy God, and to be delivered from all the miſeries inſeparable from this mortal life.

Beſides, were virtue always to be accompanied with ſenſible conſolations; did it continually form for man an happy and tranquil ſtate in this world, it would become a temporal recompenſe; in devoting ourſelves to God, we ſhould no longer ſeek the good of faith, but the conſolations of ſelf-love; we would ſeek ourſelves, while pretending to ſeek God; we would propoſe to ourſelves, in virtue, that conſcious tranquillity, in which it places the heart, by deliſvering it from thoſe violent and reſtleſs paſſions which tear it continually, rather than the obſervance of the rules and the duties which the law of God impoſes on us. The Lord would then have only mercenary and intereſted worſhippers, who would come, not to carry his yoke, but to repoſe themſelves under the ſhadow of his voice; workmen, who would offer themſelves not ſo much to labour in his vineyard, and ſupport the fatigues

of the day, and the oppreſſion of the heat, as in order to taſte in tranquillity the fruits: Servants, who, far from improving their talent for the benefit of their maſter, would turn it to their own utility, and employ it only for their own advantage.

The upright live by faith; now faith hopes, but enjoys not in this world; all is yet to come for Chriſtians; their country, their riches, their pleaſures, their inheritance, their kingdom; the preſent is not for them. Here, it is the time of tribulation and affliction; here, it is a place of exile, and a foreign country, where tears and ſighs become the only conſolation of the faithful; it is unreaſonable to expect delights in a place where every thing recals the remembrance of our miſeries; where every thing preſents new dangers to us; where we live ſurrounded by rocks; where we are a prey to a thouſand enemies; where every ſtep indangers our deſtruction; where all our days are marked by ſome new infidelity; where, delivered up to ourſelves, and without the aſſiſtance of heaven, we do nothing but evil: where we ſpread the corruption of our heart over the ſmall portion, even of good, which grace enables us to accompliſh; it is unreaſonable, I ſay, to ſeek felicity and human conſolations in a reſidence ſo melancholy and diſagreeable to the children of God. The days of our mourning and ſadneſs are in this world; thoſe of peace and joy will come afterwards: If, by abandoning God, we could acquire real happineſs, our inconſtancy would ſeem at leaſt to have an excuſe; but as I have already ſaid, the world has its diſguſts as well as virtue; by changing our maſter, we only change our puniſhment; in diverſifying our paſſions, we only diverſify our ſorrows. The world has more ſmiling aſpects, I confeſs, than virtue;

tue; but everywhere the reality is only trouble and vexation of ſpirit; and ſince cares are inevitable in this life, and we muſt encounter diſguſts either on the part of the world or of virtue, can we balance for a moment? Is it not preferable to ſuffer meritoriouſly than to ſuffer in vain; and be able to place our ſufferings only amongſt the number of our crimes? Firſt truth: Diſguſts are inevitable in this life.

Reflect. II. But I ſay, in the ſecond place, that thoſe of piety are not ſo bitter as we repreſent them to ourſelves.

For, my brethren, although we agree that the kingdom of God ſuffers violence; that Jeſus Chriſt is come, in order to make ſeparations and retrenchments which coſt much to our nature; that the period of the preſent life is the time of the birth of the new man, and always followed by pain and ſorrows; and that, in order to reconcile us to God, we muſt begin by waging a cruel war againſt ourſelves; yet it does not follow, that the lot of a ſoul, who ſerves the Lord, is to be pitied, and that the diſguſts which accompany virtue are ſo bitter as the world repreſents. Virtue has only the prejudices of the ſenſes, and of the paſſions againſt it; it has nothing melancholy but the firſt glance; and its bitterneſs is not ſuch as to render it a condition which we ought to fly from as inſupportable and wretched.

For, in the firſt place, we are ſheltered in it from the diſguſts of the world and the paſſions; and were virtue to poſſeſs only the ſingle advantage of placing us ſafe from the tempeſts of the paſſions; from phrenſies, jealouſies, ſuſpicions, and bitterneſs of heart; from the void of a worldly

worldly life; when, by turning to God, we ſhould gain only our freedom from the yoke of the world; our being placed above the reach of its hopes; of its revolutions, troubles, and eternal changes; the becoming maſters of our own hearts, and being dependent on none but ourſelves; our having none but God to account with; our no longer fatiguing ourſelves in vain, by running after phantoms, which continually elude our graſp; alas! The lot of a juſt ſoul would always be worthy of envy; whatever might be the bitter circumſtances accompanying virtue, they would ſtill be a thouſand times more ſupportable than the pleaſures of the world; and to mourn with the people of God, would be infinitely preferable to participating in the inſipid and childiſh pleaſures of the children of the age.

Secondly, If virtue does not protect us from the afflictions and diſgraces inevitable upon this earth, it at leaſt ſoftens their aſperity; it makes our heart ſubmiſſive to God; it makes us kiſs the hand which is raiſed up againſt us; it diſcovers in the blows with which the Lord afflicts us, either a cure for our paſſions, or the juſt puniſhment of our crimes. And were virtue to have only the privilege of diminiſhing our griefs, by diminiſhing our attachments; of rendering us leſs feeling to our loſſes, by gradually detaching us from all the objects which we may one day loſe; of preparing our ſoul for affliction, by keeping it continually ſubmiſſive to God; were virtue to poſſeſs this conſolation alone; alas! ought we to lament and complain of any bitterneſs which attend it? What more can be deſired in this miſerable life, where almoſt all our days are diſtinguiſhed by new afflictions and adverſities; where every thing eſcapes our graſp; where our relations, friends and

and protectors, are every moment ſnatched from us, and continually falling around us; where our fortune has no ſettlement, but changes its appearance every day; alas! what more can be deſired than a ſituation which conſoles us on theſe events; ſupports us in theſe ſtorms; calms us in theſe agitations; and which, in the eternal changes which take place here below, leaves us at leaſt always the ſame?

Thirdly, Thoſe reluctances and diſguſts which revolt us ſo ſtrongly againſt virtue, in reality conſiſt only in repreſſing the paſſions which render us unhappy, and are the ſource of all our pains; they are remedies a little grievous to be ſure, but they ſerve to cure evils which are infinitely more ſo; it is a conſtraint which fatigues us, but which, in fatiguing, delivers us from a ſlavery which weighed us down; it is a bitterneſs which mortifies the paſſions, but which in mortifying, weakens and calms them; it is a ſword which pierces the heart to the quick; but which makes the corrupted and defiled matter to flow out from it; in ſo much, that in the very moment of the wound's greateſt agony, we experience the comfort and certainty of a cure: Theſe are maxims which revolt our nature and inclinations; but which, in revolting, recal them to order and rule. Thus, the bitterneſs and the thorns of virtue have always at leaſt a preſent utility, which recompenſes their harſhneſs; in diſguſting, they purify us; in probing, they cure us; in paining, they calm us. Theſe are not like the diſguſts of the world, of which nothing remains to us, but the bitterneſs of thoſe fatigues, of thoſe conſtraints which our paſſions impoſe on us; and whoſe only fruit is, that of augmenting our miſeries, by fortifying our iniquitous paſſions: theſe are not the worldly violences which lead to nothing;

nothing; are of no value; and frequently ſerve only to render us hateful to thoſe whom we would wiſh to pleaſe; which remove to a greater diſtance from us, the favours we wiſh to merit by them; which always leave us our hatreds, our deſires, our uneaſineſſes, and our pains: Theſe are violences which advance the work of our ſanctification, which by degrees deſtroy within us the work of ſin; which perfect, which adorn us; which add every day a new ſplendour to our ſoul, a new ſolidity to our virtues, a new force to our faith, a new facility to our approaches towards ſalvation, a new firmneſs to our good deſires, and which bear long with them the fruit that rewards and conſoles us.

I do not add, that the ſource of our diſguſts is in ourſelves rather than in virtue; that it is our paſſions which give birth to our repugnances; that virtue has nothing in itſelf but what is amiable; that were our hearts not depraved through love for the fleſh, we would find nothing ſweet and conſoling but the pleaſures of innocence; that we are born for virtue and righteouſneſs; that theſe ought to be our firſt inclinations, as they are our firſt diſtinction; and if we find different diſpoſitions within us, at leaſt we have not virtue, but only ourſelves to blame. I could add, that perhaps it is the peculiar character of our heart, which ſpreads for us ſo much bitterneſs through the detail of a Chriſtian life; that being born perhaps with more lively paſſions, and a heart more ſenſible to the world and to pleaſure, virtue appears more melancholy and inſupportable to us; that not finding in the ſervice of God the ſame attraction which we have found in that of the world, our heart, accuſtomed to lively and animated pleaſures, is no longer capable of reconciling itſelf to the expected dreari-

neſs

rineſs of a Chriſtian life; that the endleſs diſſipation in which we have lived, renders the uniformity of duties more irkſome to us; the agitation of parties and pleaſures, retirement more diſguſting; our total ſubmiſſion to the paſſions, prayer more painful; the frivolous maxims with which our minds are occupied, the truths of faith more inſipid, and more unknown; that our mind being filled with only vain things: with fabulous reading, if nothing worſe; with chimerical adventures, and theatrical phantoms, is no longer capable of reliſhing any thing ſolid; that never having accuſtomed ourſelves to any thing ſerious, it is rare that the ſerioufneſs of piety does not diſguſt us, and that we find God to our taſte, if I dare to ſpeak in this manner, we who have never reliſhed any thing but the world and its vain hopes. This being the caſe, what happineſs when we bring back to virtue, a heart yet incorrupted by the world! What happineſs to enter into the ſervice of God, with happy inclinations, and ſome remains of our original innocence! When we begin early to knowthe Lord; when we return to him in that firſt ſeaſon of our life, when the world has not yet made ſuch profound and deſperate impreſſions; when the paſſions ſtill in their growth, bend eaſily towards good, and make virtue, as it were, a natural inclination to us! What happineſs when we have been able to put an early check upon our heart; when we have accuſtomed it to bear the yoke of the Lord; and when we have arreſted, almoſt in their infancy, paſſions, which render us miſerable in our guilt, and which likewiſe occaſion all the bitterneſs of our virtues! How many uneaſineſſes, how many pangs does it prevent! How many conſolations does it prepare! How many comforts ſpread through the reſt of life! and what a difference for the eaſe and tranquillity of our future years,

betwixt

betwixt days whoſe primitive ones have been pure, and thoſe which, infected in their ſource, have felt flow from thence a fatal bitterneſs which has blaſted all their joys, and ſpread itſelf through all the remainder of their career! It is ourſelves alone, ſays a holy Father, who render virtue diſagreeable; and we are wrong to complain of an evil, in which we have ſuch a ſhare ourſelves, or to attribute faults to virtue, which are our own handy-work.

But granting theſe reflections to have even leſs ſolidity; were it even true, that we are not the firſt and original cauſe of our diſguſts at virtue; it is at leaſt inconteſtible, that the longer we defer our return to God, the more invincible do we render that diſtaſte which ſeparates us from him; that the more we ſhrink and draw back, the more do we fortify that repugnance within us to virtue; that if the Chriſtian life offers at preſent only melancholy and tedious duties, they will appear more inſupportable in proportion as we grow old in the ways of the world, and in the taſte for its iniquitous pleaſures. Could the delay of our converſion ſweeten the bitter and painful portion of virtue, by holding out a little longer againſt grace, could we obtain a more favourable compoſition, as I may ſay, and as an article of it, ſtipulate, that piety ſhould afterwards be preſented to us with more charms and graces, and with conditions more agreeable and flattering: alas! whatever riſks we may run by deferring it, the hopes of ſoftening our pains and ſufferings might ſerve in ſome meaſure to excuſe our delays. But delay only prepares new ſorrows for us; the more we accuſtom our heart to the world, the more do we render it unfit for virtue: It is no longer, ſays the Prophet, but a polluted vaſe, to which the paſſions we have allowed to ſettle in it, have communicated a taſte and

and ſmell of death; which generally laſt the remainder of life. Thus, my brethren, when after a long courſe of crimes, and deeply-rooted paſſions, we muſt return to God, what obſtacles do not theſe frightful diſpoſitions preſent! What inſenſibility towards good do we not find within ourſelves! Thoſe hearts, which the world has always engroſſed, and who afterwards wiſh to conſecrate to God the remains of a life entirely mundane; what a buckler of braſs, ſays a Prophet, do they not oppoſe to grace! What hardneſs of heart to the holy conſolations of virtue! They may find it juſt; but it is impoſſible, they ſay, to find it amiable: They may return to God; but they enjoy him no more: They may nouriſh themſelves with the truth, but it is no more for them but the bread of tribulation and bitterneſs: They may ſeek the kingdom of God, and the treaſure of the goſpel; but it is like unfortunate ſlaves, condemned to ſearch for gold in the bowels of the earth, and waſte their ſtrength againſt the oppoſing rocks: They may draw for water from the wells of Jacob; but they can only reap the toil; they can never partake of thoſe comforts and conſolations which bear peace and refreſhment to the ſoul: They wiſh to draw near to God, yet every thing ſeparates them from him; they wiſh to fly from the world, yet wherever they go, there they carry it with them in their heart: They ſeek the ſociety of virtuous people, yet in their company they find a wearineſs, and a melancholy ſtiffneſs, which diſguſts them with piety itſelf: They apply themſelves to holy books; and alas! it is only a tireſome and fatiguing decency which ſupports their patience. It appears, that in virtue, they act a borrowed character, ſo little does it become them, and ſo much does their part conſtrain and tire them: and although, in reality, they ſeek ſalvation, yet there appears a ſomething ſo foreign and conſtrained in their efforts, that we believe they only aſſume

the ſemblance of it; and that feeling themſelves not born for virtue, they wiſh at leaſt to give themſelves the appearances of it.

Diſguſts and wearineſſes ſhould not, therefore, drive us from virtue; ſince, in proportion as we retire from it, they become every day more violent and inſupportable. But candidly, my brethren, is it for us to reproach to God, that we weary in his ſervice? Ah! Did our ſlaves and domeſtics make us the ſame reproach; had they to lament the wearineſs they experience in our ſervice, they would certainly be entitled to complain of it: Our eternal humours, from which they ſuffer ſo much; our fancies and caprices, to which they muſt accommodate themſelves; our hours and moments, to which they muſt ſubject themſelves; our pleaſures and taſtes, to which they muſt ſacrifice their reſt and liberty; our indolence, which alone coſts them ſo much; makes them endure ſo much wearineſs; paſs ſo many melancholy moments, without our even deigning to obſerve it; they undoubtedly would be entitled to complain of their cruel ſituation and ſufferings.

Nevertheleſs, ſhould they venture to ſay, that they weary in our ſervice; that they reap not the ſmalleſt ſatisfaction from it; that they feel no inclination for us, and that every ſervice they perform, is diſguſting to a degree ſcarcely ſupportable: Alas! We would regard them as fools; we would find them too happy in having to ſupport our humours and caprices; we would think them ſufficiently honoured, by being permitted to be near us; and fully recompenſed for all their fatigues. Ah, my brethren! And God, does he not ſufficiently recompenſe thoſe who ſerve him, that they ſhould ſupport any little diſguſts or wearineſſes which may be found in his ſervice? Are we not ſtill too happy,

happy, by this acceptance of our ſervices, in ſpite of the repugnances which render them cold and languid? Does he not ſufficiently load us with bleſſings, to be entitled to exact our ſufferance of a few ſlight ſorrows for his ſake? Does he not promiſe us ſtill more, ſufficiently precious to ſweeten the trifling diſguſts attached to the fulfilment of his ordinances? Muſt not he find it ſtrange, that vile creatures, who hold all for him, who exiſt only through him, and who expect all from him, ſhould complain of diſlike to his ſervice? That worms of the earth, whoſe only boaſt is the honour of belonging to him, dare complain of feeling no inclination for him, and that it is both melancholy and wearifome to ſerve or to be faithful to him? Is he then a maſter like us; fanciful, intolerant, indolent, entirely occupied with himſelf, and who ſeeks only to render himſelf happy, at the expence and comfort of thoſe who ſerve him? Unjuſt that we are! We dare offer reproaches to the Almighty, which we would regard as outrages upon ourſelves, from the mouths of our ſlaves!

Second Truth: The diſguſts which accompany virtue are not ſo bitter as we repreſent them to ourſelves.

Reflect. III. But even were they ſo, I have ſaid, in the third place, that they would ſtill be infinitely leſs than thoſe of the world: And it is here, my brethren, that the teſtimony of the world itſelf, and the ſelf-experience of worldly ſouls, anſwer every purpoſe of a proof. For if you continue in the ways of the world, and of the paſſions, what is your whole life but a continual wearineſs, where, by diverſifying your pleaſures, you only diverſify your diſguſts and uneaſineſſes? What is it but an eternal void, where you are a burden to yourſelf? What is it but a pompous circulation of duties, attentions, ceremonies, amuſements,

ments, and trifles, which inceſſantly revolving, poſſeſs one ſingle advantage, that of unpleaſantly filling up moments which hang heavy upon you, and which you know not otherwiſe to employ? What is your life but a flux and reflux of deſires, hatreds, chagrins, jealouſies, and hopes, which poiſon all your pleaſures, and are the cauſe that, ſurrounded by every thing which ought to enſure your happineſs, you cannot ſucceed in being contented with yourſelves?

What compariſon is there betwixt the phrenſies of the paſſions, the chagrin of a ſtriking neglect, the ſenſibility of a bad office, and the ſlight ſorrows of virtue? What compariſon betwixt the unlimited ſubjections to ambition; the fatigues and toils of pretenſions and expectancies; the pains to enſure ſucceſs; the exertions and ſubmiſſions neceſſary to pleaſe; the cares, uneaſineſſes, and agitations, in order to exalt ourſelves; and the ſlight violences which aſſure to us the kingdom of heaven? What compariſon betwixt the frightful remorſes of the conſcience, that internal worm, which inceſſantly gnaws us; that ſadneſs of guilt, which undermines and brings us low indeed; that weight of iniquity, which overwhelms us; that internal ſword, which pierces us to the quick; which we know not how to draw forth, and carry with us wherever we go; and the amiable ſorrow of the penitence which operates ſalvation? My God, can we complain of thee, after knowing the world; Can thy yoke appear grievous, after quiting that of the paſſions? And the thorns of thy croſs, are they not flowers, when compared to thoſe which the ways of iniquity and the world have ſown?

Thus every day we hear the worſhippers of the world decry the world they ſerve; complain with the utmoſt diſſatisfaction of their lot; utter the keeneſt invectives againſt

againſt its injuſtice and abuſes; cenſure, condemn, and deſpiſe it; but find me if you can any truly pious ſouls, who ſend forth invectives againſt virtue; who condemn or deſpiſe it; and who deteſt their lot of being embarked in a voyage, ſo full of chagrin and bitterneſs. The world itſelf continually envies the deſtiny of the virtuous, and acknowledges that none are happy but the upright; but find me a truly pious ſoul, who envies the deſtiny of the world; who publiſhes, that none are happy but its partiſans; who admires the wiſdom of their choice, and regards his own condition as the moſt miſerable and the moſt fooliſh: What ſhall I ſay? We have frequently ſeen ſinners, who, through deſpair and diſguſt at the world, have fled to the oppoſite extremes; loſe reſt, health, reaſon, and life; fall into ſtates of horror, and the blackeſt melancholy, and no longer regard life but as the greateſt torment. But where are the righteous, whom the diſguſts which accompany virtue have thrown into ſuch dreadful extremities? They ſometimes complain of their ſorrows; but they ſtill prefer them to the pleaſures of the paſſions: Virtue, it is true, may ſometimes appear melancholy and unpleaſing to them; but with all her ſadneſs, they love her much more than guilt; They would wiſh a few more ſenſible ſupports and conſolations from the Father of Mercies; but they deteſt thoſe of the world: They ſuffer; but the ſame hand which proves, ſupports them; and they are not tempted beyond their ſtrength: They feel what you call the weight of the yoke of Jeſus Chriſt; but in recalling the load of iniquity, under which they had ſo long groaned, they find their preſent lot happy, and the compariſon calms and comforts them.

In effect, my brethren, in the firſt place, the violences which we do to ourſelves, are much more agreeable than thoſe

thoſe which come from without, and happen in ſpite of us. Now the violences of virtue, are at leaſt voluntary: Theſe are croſſes which we chooſe from reaſon, and impoſe upon ourſelves from duty: they are often bitter, but we are conſoled by the reflection of having choſen them. But the diſguſts of the world are forced croſſes, which come without our being conſulted: It is a hateful yoke, which is impoſed on us againſt our will: We wiſh it not: we deteſt it; yet nevertheleſs we muſt drink all the bitterneſs of the cup. In virtue, we only ſuffer, becauſe it is our inclination to ſuffer: In the world, we ſuffer ſo much the more, in proportion as we wiſh it leſs, and as our inclinations are inimical to our ſufferings.

Secondly, The diſguſts accompanying virtue are a burden only to indolence and lazineſs; theſe are repugnances, bitter only to the ſenſes: But the diſguſts of the world; ah! they pierce to the quick; they mortify all the paſſions; they humble pride; pull down vanity; light up envy; mortify ambition, and none of our feelings eſcape the influence of their ſadneſs and bitterneſs.

Thirdly, thoſe of virtue are ſenſible only in their firſt operation: The firſt efforts coſt us much; the ſequel ſoftens and tranquillizes them; the paſſions, which are generally the occaſion of any diſguſt at virtue, have this in particular, that the more we repreſs them, the more tractable they become; the violences we do to them, gradually calm the heart, and leave us leſs to ſuffer from thoſe to come; but the diſguſts of the world are always new; as they always find in us the ſame paſſions, they always leave us the ſame bitterneſſes; thoſe which have gone before, only render thoſe that follow more inſupportable.

In

In a word, the diſguſts of the world inflame our paſſions, and conſequently increaſe our ſufferings; thoſe of virtue repreſs them, and by theſe means gradually eſtabliſh peace and tranquillity in our ſoul.

Fourthly, The diſguſts of the world happen to thoſe who moſt faithfully ſerve it: It does not treat them better, becauſe they are more devoted to its party, and more zealous for its abuſes; on the contrary, the hearts moſt ardent for the world, are almoſt always thoſe who experience the largeſt ſhare of its mortifications; becauſe they feel more ſenſibly its neglect and injuſtice: Their adour for it, is the ſource of all their uneaſineſſes. But with God, we have only our coldneſs to dread; for the diſguſts which may accompany virtue, in general, have only relaxation and idleneſs for principle; the more our ardour for the Lord increaſes, the more do our diſguſts diminiſh; the more our zeal inflames, the more do our repugnances weaken; the more we ſerve him with fidelity, the more charms and conſolations do we find in his ſervice; It is by relaxing, that we render our duties diſagreeable; it is by leſſening our fervour, that we add a new weight to our yoke; and if in ſpite of our fidelity, the diſguſts continue, they are then trials, and not puniſhments; it is not that conſolations are refuſed, it is a new occaſion of merit which is prepared for us; it is not an irritated God, who ſhuts his heart to us; it is a merciful God, who purifies our own; it is not a diſcontented maſter, who ſuſpends his favours; it is a jealous Lord, who wiſhes to prove our love; our homages are not rejected; our ſubmiſſions and ſervices are only anticipated; it is not meant to repulſe, but to aſſure to us the price of our ſufferings, by rejecting every thing which might ſtill mingle the man with God; ourſelves with grace; human ſupports with

with the gifts of Heaven ; and the riches of faith with the conſolations of ſelf love. Behold, my brethren, the laſt truth, with which I ſhall terminate this diſcourſe : Not only the diſguſts accompany virtue, are not ſo bitter as thoſe of the world, but they likewiſe poſſeſs reſources which thoſe of the world have not.

Reflect. IV. I ſay reſources : alas ! my brethren, we find none but in virtue. The world wounds the heart ; but it furniſhes no remedies : It has its chagrins, but nothing to comfort them : It is full of diſguſts and bitterneſs, but we find no reſources in it. But in virtue, there is no ſorrow which has not its conſolation ; and if in it we find repugnances and diſguſts, we find likewiſe a thouſand reſources which ſoothe them.

In the firſt place, Peace of heart, and the teſtimony of the conſcience. What luxury, to be at peace with ourſelves ; no longer to carry within us that importunate and corroding worm, which purſued us every where : no longer to be racked by eternal remorſes, which poiſoned every comfort of life : In a word, to be delivered from iniquity ! The ſenſes may ſtill ſuffer from the ſorrows of virtue, but the heart at leaſt is tranquil.

Secondly, The certainty that our ſufferings are not loſt ; that our ſorrows become a new merit for us ; that our repugnances, in preparing for us new ſacrifices, ſecure an additional claim to the promiſes of faith ; that were virtue to coſt us leſs, it would likewiſe bear an inferior price in the ſight of God ; and that he only renders the road ſo difficult, in order to render our crown more brilliant and glorious.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, Submiſſion to the orders of God, who has his reaſons for refuſing to us the viſible conſolations of virtue; whoſe wiſdom conſults our intereſt more than our paſſions; and who has preferred bringing us to himſelf by a leſs agreeable road, becauſe it is a more ſecure one.

Fourthly, The favours with which he accompanies our ſorrows; which ſuſtain our faith at the ſame time that our violences lower ſelf-love; which fortify our heart in truth, at the ſame time that our ſenſes are diſguſted with it: which make our mind prompt and fervent, although the fleſh is weak and feeble; in ſo much, that he renders our virtue ſo much the more ſolid, as to us it ſeems melancholy and painful.

Fifthly, The external ſuccours of piety, which are ſo many new reſources in our faintings and thirſt; the holy myſteries, where Jeſus Chriſt, himſelf the comforter of faithful ſouls, comes to conſole our heart; the truths of the divine writings, which promiſe nothing in this world to the upright but tribulation and tears; calm our fears, by informing us, that our pleaſures are to come; and that the ſufferings which diſcourage us, far from making us diſtruſt our virtue, ought to render our hope more animated and certain: In a word, the hiſtory of the ſaints, who have undergone the ſame diſguſts and trials; conſequently, we have ſo much the leſs reaſon to complain, as characters ſo infinitely more pious than we have experienced the ſame lot; that ſuch has almoſt always been the conduct of God towards his ſervants; and that if any thing in this life can prove his love towards us, it is that of his leading us by the ſame path that he did the ſaints, and treating us in this world in the ſame manner as he did the upright.

Sixthly, The tranquillity of the life, and the uniſor-

mity of the duties, which have ſucceeded to the phrenſies of the paſſions, and the tumult of a worldly life; which have provided for us much more happy and peaceful days than thoſe we had ever paſſed in the midſt of diſſipation; and which, though they ſtill leave us ſomething to ſuffer, yet occaſion us to enjoy a more tranquil and ſupportable lot.

Laſtly, Faith, which brings eternity nearer to us; which diſcovers to us the inſignificancy of worldly affairs; that we approach the happy term; that the preſent life is but a rapid inſtant; and conſequently, that our ſufferings cannot endure long, but that this fleeting moment of tribulation aſſures to us a glorious and immortal futurity, which will endure as long as God himſelf. What reſources for a faithful heart! What diſproportion betwixt the ſufferings of virtue and thoſe of guilt! It is in order to make us feel the difference that God often permits the world to poſſeſs us for a time; that in youth we deliver ourſelves up to the ſway of the paſſions; on purpoſe that when he afterwards recalls us to himſelf, we may know by experience how much more eaſy is his yoke than that of the world: I will permit, ſays he in the Scriptures, that my people ſerve the nations of the earth for ſome time; that they allow themſelves to be ſeduced by their profane ſuperſtitions, in order that they may know the difference betwixt my ſervice and the ſervice of the kings of the earth; and that they may feel how much more eaſy is my yoke than the ſervitude of men.

Happy the ſouls, who, in order to be undeceived, have had no occaſion for this experience, and who have not ſo dearly bought the knowledge of this world's vanity, and the melancholy lot of iniquitous paſſions. Alas! ſince at laſt we muſt be undeceived, and muſt abandon and deſpiſe it; ſince the

the day will come, when we ſhall find it frivolous, diſguſting, and inſupportable, when of all its fooliſh joys, there ſhall no longer remain to us, but the cruel remorſe of having yielded to them; the confuſion of having followed them; the obſtacles to good which they will have left in our heart; why not anticipate and prevent ſuch melancholy regrets? Why not do to-day, what we allow ourſelves muſt one day be done? Why wait till the world has made ſuch deep wounds in our heart, to run afterwards to remedies, which cannot re-eſtabliſh us without greater pain, and coſting us doubly dear? We complain of ſome ſlight diſguſts which accompany virtue; but alas! the firſt believers, who, to the maxims of the goſpel, ſacrificed their riches, reputation, and life; who run to the ſcaffolds to confeſs Jeſus Chriſt; who paſſed their days in chains, in priſons, in ſhame and in ſufferance, and to whom it coſt ſo much to ſerve Jeſus Chriſt; did they complain of the bitterneſs of his ſervice? Did they reproach him with rendering unhappy thoſe who ſerved him? Ah! they glorified themſelves in their tribulation; they preferred ſhame and diſgrace with Jeſus Chriſt to all the vain pleaſures of Egypt; they reckoned as nothing, wheels, fires, and every inſtrument of torture, in the hopes of a bleſſed immortality, which would amply recompenſe their preſent ſufferings: In the midſt of torments, they chanted hymns; and regarded as a gain, the loſs of all, for the intereſts of their maſter. What a life, in the eyes of the fleſh, is that of theſe unfortunate men, preſcribed, perſecuted, driven from their country, having only dens and caverns for their habitation, regarded every where as the horror of the univerſe; become execrable to their friends, their fellow-citizens, and their relations! They eſteemed themſelves happy in belonging to Jeſus Chriſt; in their opinion, they could not too dearly purchaſe the glory of being his diſciples, and the

913924

the conſolation of pretending to his promiſes: And we, my brethren, in the midſt of too many of the conveniencies of life; ſurrounded by too much abundance, proſperitry and worldly glory; finding, perhaps for our misfortune, in the applauſes of the world, which cannot prevent itſelf from eſteeming worth, the recompenſe of virtue; in the midſt of our relations, our children, and our friends; we complain, that it coſts us too much to ſerve Jeſus Chriſt; we murmur againſt the ſlight bitterneſs we experience in virtue; we almoſt perſuade ourſelves, that God requires too much of his creatures: Ah! when the compariſon ſhall one day be made betwixt theſe little diſguſts which we exaggerate ſo much; and the croſſes, the wheels, the fires, and all the the tortures of the martyrs; the auſterities of the anchorites; the faſts, the tears, and ſufferings of ſo many holy penitents; alas! we ſhall then bluſh to find ourſelves almoſt ſingle before Jeſus Chriſt; we, who have ſuffered nothing for him; to whom his kingdom has coſt nothing; and who individually bearing before his tribunal more iniquities than a number of ſaints together, cannot, however, in aſſembling all our works of piety, compare them united to a ſingle inſtance of their exertions.

Let us ceaſe, therefore, to complain of God, ſince he has ſo many reaſons to complain of us; let us ſerve him as he wiſhes to be ſerved by us; if he ſoftens our yoke, let us bleſs his goodneſs, which prepares theſe conſolations for our weakneſs; if he makes us feel the whole extent of its weight, let us ſtill eſteem ourſelves happy, that he deigns at that price to accept of our works and homage: With equal gratitude, let us receive from his hand conſolation or affliction, ſince every thing which proceeds from him alike conducts us to him: Let us learn, to be as the Apoſtle, in want or abundance, provided we belong to Jeſus Chriſt

Chriſt; the eſſential part is not, to ſerve him with pleaſure, it is not to ſerve him with fidelity. In reality, my brethren, in ſpite of all the diſguſts or repugnances which may accompany virtue, there is no real or true pleaſure but in ſerving God; there is no ſolid conſolation to be reaped, but by attaching ourſelves to him, No, ſaid the Sage, it is ſtill better to feed upon the bread of wormwood and gall with the fear of the Lord, than to live in the midſt of pleaſures and profane joys, under the laſh of his wrath and indignation. Alas! of what pleaſure can we be capable, when we are the enemies of God? What pleaſure can we taſte, when we bear in our heart only the anguiſh and bitterneſs of guilt? No, ſays the Sage once more, The fear of God can alone charm our wearineſſes; ſoften our moments of melancholy; ſoothe our endleſs anguiſhes; and enable us to find a certain degree of ſweetneſs, even in the evils incident to our nature. It is that which renders retirement ſweet, and enables us to enjoy repoſe, far from the world and its amuſements: It is that which makes days paſs quickly, and occupies in peace and tranquillity every moment; and though apparently it allows us more leiſure than a worldly life, yet it leaves a much ſmaller portion to wearineſs.

Great God! What honour does not the world unintentionally pay to thy ſervice! What an affecting eulogium on the deſtiny of the upright is the lot of ſinners! How well, my God, thou knoweſt to extort glory and praiſe from even thy enemies! and how little excuſe thou leaveſt to thoſe ſouls who depart from thy paths, ſince in order to draw them to virtue, thou makeſt a reſource to them even of their crimes; and employeſt their wants to recal them to thy eternal mercies.

Now to God, &c. SERMON

SERMON IV.

THE UNCERTAINTY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IN A STATE OF LUKEWARMNESS.

LUKE iv. 38.

And he roſe out of the Synagogue, and entered into Simon's houſe: and Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever: and they beſought him for her.

NOTHING more naturally repreſents the ſituation of a languid and lukewarm ſoul, than the ſtate of infirmity in which the goſpel here deſcribes Peter's mother-in-law to have been. It may be ſaid, that coldneſs and indolence in the ways of God, though otherwiſe accompanied with a life free from enormities, is a kind of ſecret and dangerous fever, which gradually undermines the powers of the ſoul, changes all its good diſpoſitions, weakens its faculties, inſenſibly corrupts its inward parts, alters its propenſities, ſpreads an univerſal bitterneſs through all its duties, diſguſts it with every thing proper, with all holy and neceſſary nouriſhment; and finiſhes at laſt, by a total extinction, and an inevitable death.

This langour of the ſoul, in the path of ſalvation, is ſo much the more dangerous, as it is leſs obſerved.

Our exemption from open irregularity gives us confidence; the external regularity of conduct, which attracts from men thoſe praiſes due only to virtue, flatters us; and the

the ſecret compariſon we make of our morals with the exceſſes of thoſe avowed ſinners, whom the world and their paſſions govern, unites to blind us: We regard our ſituation as a ſtate, leſs perfect indeed, but always certain of ſalvation; ſeeing our conſcience can only reproach us with indolence and negligence in the diſcharge of our duties; too lenient a correction of our appetites; ſelf-love, and ſome ſlight infidelities, which do not bring death to the ſoul. Nevertheleſs, ſince the holy writings repreſent the adulterous and the lukewarm ſoul as equally rejected by God; and as they pronounce the ſame anathema againſt thoſe who deſpiſe the works of the Lord, and thoſe who perform them with negligence, this ſtate of coldneſs and languor in the ways of God, muſt neceſſarily be very ſuſpicious with regard to ſalvation, both from the preſent diſpoſitions which it gives to the ſoul; and from thoſe to which, ſooner or later, it never fails to lead it.

I ſay, in the firſt place, from the preſent diſpoſitions it gives to the ſoul; namely, a fund of indolence, ſelf-love, diſguſt at virtue, infidelity, and deliberate diſregard to every thing they believe not abſolutely eſſential in their duties: Diſpoſitions, that form a ſtate, very doubtful of ſalvation.

Secondly, From thoſe, to which, ſooner or later, lukewarmneſs conducts us; namely, a forgetfulneſs of God, and an open and ſhameful departure from every thing ſacred.

From theſe I wiſh to eſtabliſh two capital truths in this matter, which expoſe the danger of a lukewarm and infidel life; and which, from their importance, will furniſh

us

us with ſubject for two diſcourſes. The firſt, that it is very doubtful, whether in this habitual ſtate of coldneſs and languor, the lukewarm ſoul (as it believes,) preſerves the righteouſneſs and ſanctifying grace upon which it grounds its ſecurity.

The ſecond, That it were even leſs doubtful, whether it had preſerved or loſt before God, the ſanctifying grace; at any rate, it is certain of being unable long to preſerve it.

The uncertainty of righteouſneſs in a ſtate of lukewarmneſs. This firſt truth will be the ſubject of the preſent Diſcourſe.

The certainty of a departure from righteouſneſs in that ſtate is the ſecond truth, upon which, in the following one, I ſhall endeavour to inſtruct you.

PART I. "If we ſay that we have no ſin, we deceive ourſelves, and the truth is not in us," ſays an Apoſtle. The pureſt virtue below is never free, therefore, from ſtain. Man, full of darkneſs and paſſions, ſince the entrance of ſin into the world, cannot always be ſo attentive to regularity, but that he muſt ſometimes be deceived, and err; nor ſo impreſſed with inviſible good, but he will allow himſelf to be ſometimes caught by worldly and oſtenſible riches; becauſe their impreſſions on the mind are lively and quick, and they always find in our hearts diſpoſitions too favourable to their dangerous ſeductions.

The fidelity which the law of God exacts from juſt ſouls, excludes not, therefore, a thouſand imperfections, inſepa-

rable

rable from our nature, and from which the moſt guarded and watchful piety cannot defend itſelf; but of theſe, there are two deſcriptions: The firſt, which happen through our weakneſs, are leſs infidelities than ſurpriſes, where the weight of corruption preponderates over the inclination or choice; and which the Lord, ſays St. Auguſtine, permits to remain in the moſt faithful ſouls, in order to nouriſh their humility; excite their lamentations; reanimate their deſires; their diſguſts at their preſent exilement, and their longings for its termination: The ſecond claſs are thoſe which pleaſe us; which we juſtify to ourſelves; which it appears impoſſible for us to renounce; which we look upon as neceſſary ſweetners of virtue; in which we ſee nothing criminal, becauſe we perceive not the guilt; which form a part of the deliberate and general ſyſtem of our morals and conduct, and conſtitute that ſtate of indolence and coldneſs in the ways of God, which is the cauſe of condemnation to ſo many, born otherwiſe, perhaps, with principles of virtue, deteſtation of iniquity; a fund of religion, and fear of God; and happy diſpoſitions for ſalvation.

Now, I ſay, that this ſtate of relaxation and infidelity; this tranquil and continued negligence of every thing which perhaps appears not eſſential in our duties; this effeminate indulgence of all our deſires, ſo long as they offer not actual guilt to our ſight: In a word, this life, altogether according to our animal nature, our humours, temperaments, and ſelf-love, ſo common with thoſe who make a public profeſſion of piety; ſo ſafe in appearance; ſo glorious even in the eyes of men; and to which the general error attaches the names of virtue and regularity: I ſay, that this is a ſtate extremely doubtful, to attain ſalvation; that it derives its ſource from an irregular heart,

where the Holy Spirit no longer reigns; and that all the rules of faith induce us to think, that a ſoul of this deſcription is already, without being ſenſible of it, fallen from righteouſneſs and grace: In the firſt place, Becauſe the deſire of perfection eſſential to Chriſtian piety, is extinguiſhed in his heart. Secondly, Becauſe the rules of faith, almoſt always very uncertain in the diſtinction of guilt from venial errors, with regard to other ſinners, are infinitely more ſo with reſpect to the unfaithful and lukewarm heart. Thirdly, Becauſe of all the external marks of a living and habitual charity, there is not in it the ſmalleſt appearance of one. Let us inveſtigate theſe truths; for they are indeed worthy of your attention.

Every Chriſtian ſoul is obliged to bend every effort towards the perfection of his ſtate. I ſay obliged: for although the degree of perfection be not compriſed in the precept, to endeavour at, to labour for perfection is nevertheleſs a commandment, and a duty eſſential to every believer. Be ye perfect, ſays our Saviour, becauſe the heavenly Father whom ye ſerve is perfect. I can perceive but one eſſential point, ſaid St. Paul, viz. to forget whatever I have done to this period; (and what, my brethren, was he to forget? his endleſs labours, continual ſufferings, and apoſtolic courſes; ſo many nations converted to faith; ſo many illuſtrious churches founded; ſo many revelations and prodigies?) and inceſſantly advancing to direct my views to the attainment of what I have yet to perform. The deſire of perfection; the continued efforts to attain it; the holy inquietudes in conſequence of the innumerable obſtacles which check our progreſs, do not therefore compriſe only a ſimple advice, and a practice reſerved for the cloiſter and the deſert alone, they form the eſſential ſtate of a Chriſtian, and the life according to faith on this earth.

For

For the life, according to faith, which the juſt man leads, is only an uninterrupted deſire, that the kingdom of God may be accompliſhed in our hearts; a holy eagerneſs, to form a perfect reſemblance in us to Jeſus Chriſt, and to increaſe even to the plenitude of the new man; a continual lamentation, excited by the internal ſenſibility of our own miſeries, and by the load of corruption which oppreſſes the ſoul, and makes it to bear ſo many marks ſtill of the worldly man; a daily ſtruggle betwixt the law of the Spirit, which continually wiſhes to raiſe us above our ſenſual appetites, and the dominion of the fleſh, which inceſſantly draws us back towards ourſelves: Such is the ſtate of faith, and of Chriſtian piety. Whoever you be, great, or of humble rank, prince or ſubject, courtier or recluſe, behold the perfection to which you are called; behold the ground-work, and the ſpirit of your vocation. The auſterities of an Anchorite; the ſilence and ſolitude of the deſert; the poverty of the cloiſter, are not demanded of you; but you are required to labour inceſſantly towards the repreſſion of thoſe internal deſires, which oppoſe themſelves to the law of God; to mortify thoſe rebellious inclinations, which ſo unwillingly ſubmit to order and duty; in a word, to advance as much as poſſible your perfect conformity with Jeſus Chriſt: Behold the degree of perfection to which Chriſtian grace calls you, and the eſſential duty of a juſt ſoul.

Now, from the moment you give way to every inclination, provided it extends not to the abſolute infraction of the precept; from the moment you confine yourſelves to the eſſentials of the law; that you eſtabliſh a kind of ſyſtem of coldneſs and negligence; that you ſay to yourſelves, "We are unable to ſupport a more exact, or more exemplary life;" from that moment you renounce the deſire of

of perfection: You no longer propose to yourselves an unceasing advancement towards that point of piety and holiness to which the Almighty calls you, and towards which his grace never ceases to impel you in secret: You no longer grieve over those miseries and weaknesses, so inimical to your progress: You no longer wish the kingdom of God to be established in your hearts: You abandon, therefore, from that moment, the great work of righteousness, at which you are commanded to labour: You neglect the care of your soul: You enter not into the designs of grace. On the contrary, you check its holy impressions: You are no longer Christian; that is to say, that this disposition alone, this formal intention of limiting yourselves to the essentials, and of regarding all the rest as laudable excesses, and works of supererogation, is a state of sin and death, since it is an avowed contempt of that great commandment, which requires us to be perfect; that is to say, to labour towards becoming so.

Nevertheless, when we come to instruct you with regard to Christian perfection, you look upon it as to be found only in cloisters and solitudes, and scarcely will you deign to give the smallest attention to our instructions. You deceive yourselves, my brethren: The individuals who adopt retirement, certainly employ austerities, fastings, and watchings, as means to succeed in that mortification of the passions, to which we are equally invited: They engage themselves to a perfection of means, which I confess our state will not admit of; but the perfection of the end, to which these means conduct, viz. the command and regulation of the affections, proper contempt of the world, detachment from ourselves, submission of the senses and the flesh to the Spirit, and renovation of the heart, are the perfection of all states, the engagement of

of all Chriſtians, and the covenant of our baptiſm. To renounce this perfection therefore, by limiting ourſelves from choice, or in conſequence of our rank in the world, to an effeminate, ſenſual, and worldly life, exempt only from ſtriking enormities, is to renounce the Chriſtian calling, and change the grace of faith, which has made us members of Jeſus Chriſt, into a ſhameful and unworthy indolence. Firſt reaſon.

But were this ſtate even not ſo dubious for ſalvation, with reſpect to the deſire of that perfection eſſential to a Chriſtian life, and which is extinguiſhed in a lukewarm and unfaithful ſoul, it would become ſo by the imbecility which it occaſions, and in which it places itſelf, of diſtinguiſhing in its conduct the infidelities which may extend to guilt, from thoſe which may be termed ſimple errors. For though it is true, that all ſins are not ſins which bring death, as St. John obſerves, and that Chriſtian morality acknowledges errors, which only grieve the Holy Spirit within us; and others which extinguiſh it altogether in the ſoul; nevertheleſs the rules which it furniſhes to diſtinguiſh theſe, can neither be always certain nor general at the moment they are applied: Some circumſtances relative to ourſelves continually change their nature. I ſpeak not here of thoſe manifeſt and abſolute tranſgreſſions of the precepts marked in the law, which leave no heſitation reſpecting the enormity of the offence: I ſpeak of a thouſand doubtful and daily tranſgreſſions; of hatred, jealouſy, evil-ſpeaking, ſenſuality, vanity, idleneſs, duplicity, negligence in the practice of our duties, and ambition; in all which, it is extremely difficult to define how far the precept may be violated: Now, I ſay, that it is by the diſpoſition alone of the heart, that the meaſure and guilt of theſe faults can be decided; that the rules

there

there are always uncertain and changeable; and that frequently what is only weakneſs or ſupriſe in the juſt, is guilt and corruption not only in the ſinner, but likewiſe in the lukewarm and unfaithful ſoul: This is proven by the following examples taken from the Holy writings.

Saul, in diſobedience to the order of the Lord, ſpared the king of the Amalekites, and the moſt precious ſpoils of that infidel prince. The crime does not appear conſiderable; but as it proceeded from a fund of pride, of relaxation in the ways of God, and a vain complaiſance in his victory; this action is the commencement of his reprobation, and the Spirit of God withdraws itſelf from him. Joſhua, on the contrary, too credulous, ſpares the Gibeonites, whom the Lord had commanded him to exterminate: He went not before the ark to conſult him previous to his alliance with theſe impoſtors. But this infidelity being an act of precipitancy and ſurpriſe, rather than a diſobedience; and proceeding from a heart ſtill faithful, religious, and ſubmiſſive to God, it appears ſlight in his eyes, and the pardon almoſt immediately follows the crime. Now if this principle be incontrovertible, upon what do you depend, when you regard your daily and habitual infidelities as ſlight? Are you acquainted with all the corruption of your heart, from which they proceed? God knows it, who is the ſearcher and judge; and his eyes are very different from thoſe of men. But if it be permitted to judge before the time, ſay, if this fund of indolence and infidelity which is in you; of voluntary perſeverance in a ſtate diſpleaſing to God; of deliberate contempt for all the duties which you conſider as not eſſential; of attention and care, as I may ſay, to labour only for the Lord when he opens before you the gates of puniſhment and deſtruction: Say, if all theſe can conſtitute in his ſight

ſight a ſtate worthy of a Chriſtian heart; and if faults, which proceed from ſo corrupted a principle, can in reality be ſlight, or worthy of indulgence?

Paul, my brethren, that miraculous man, to whom the ſecrets of heaven had been revealed; Paul, who no longer lived for himſelf, but in whom Jeſus Chriſt alone lived; Paul, who earneſtly longed every moment for the diſſolution of his earthly body, that he might be clothed with immortality: This Apoſtle, always ready to ſacrifice his life for his maſter, and a willing victim to faith; this elected inſtrument of our Lord and Saviour, whoſe conſcience could reproach him with nothing; knew not, however, whether he merited the love or hatred of his Lord? whether he ſtill poſſeſſed in his heart, or had forfeited the inviſible treaſure of charity; and in theſe melancholy doubts, the teſtimony of his conſcience was inſufficient to calm his dread and uncertainty. David, that king ſo penitent, whoſe delights were centered in the conſtant meditation of the law of God, and whom the Holy Spirit calls a king after God's own heart; David trembles, however, leſt the iniquity of his crimes be not ſufficiently known to him; leſt the corruption of his heart conceals not from him their enormity. He figures to himſelf unknown gulfs in his conſcience; which cauſe him to ſhed torrents of tears; to proſtrate himſelf before the Majeſty and Holineſs of his God, and ſupplicate his aſſiſtance towards his purification from ſecret infidelities, by making him ſenſible of them. And you, who watch not; nor ſearch your hearts; you, who devoted to lukewarm and ſenſual habits, with deliberate coolneſs, allow yourſelves every day a thouſand infidelities, upon the iniquity of which, you are utterly ignorant what judgment the Almighty may form: You, who

every

every moment experience thoſe ſuſpicious ebulitions of paſſion, where, in ſpite of all your ſelf-indulgence, you find it ſo difficult to prove, that the will has not accompanied the gratification: and that you have not overſtept that critical and dangerous line, which diſtinguiſhes actual guilt from involuntary error: You, in whom almoſt every action is ſuſpicious; who every moment may be demanding at your own heart, "Have I not gone too far?" who, in your own conſcience, feel movements and regrets, which you will never quiet: You, who in ſpite of ſo many juſt ſubjects of dread, believe the ſtate of your conſcience to be perfectly known to you; that the deciſions of your own ſelf-love, with regard to your infidelities, are the deciſions of the Almighty; and that the Lord whom you ſerve with ſo much coldneſs and negligence, does not yield you up to your own blindneſs, and puniſh your crimes, by making you miſtake them: You can poſſibly believe that you ſtill preſerve your righteouſneſs, and the grace of ſanctification, and can quiet yourſelves upon your viſible and habitual guilt, by a pretended inviſible exerciſe of righteouſneſs, of which you can produce neither mark or proof?

O man! How little art thou acquainted with the illuſions of the human heart, and the terrible judgments of God upon thoſe ſouls which reſemble thee! Thou ſayeſt to thyſelf; I am rich, I am loaded with the good things of this world; (with this, our Saviour formerly reproached a cold and unbelieving ſoul;) And thou perceiveſt not, continued he, (for blindneſs and preſumption are the diſtinguiſhing character of coldneſs,) that in my ſight, thou art poor, miſerable, blind, and loſt to every thing. It is the deſtiny, therefore, of a lukewarm and unfaithful ſoul, to

to live in error and illuſion; to believe himſelf juſt, and acceptable to God; while alas! before him, he is loſt, without knowing it, to both grace and righteouſneſs.

And one reflection, which I beg you to make here, is, that the confidence of ſuch ſouls, is ſo much the more illuſive and ill-founded, as there exiſts not a ſoul, leſs capable of judging of his own heart, than the lukewarm and unfaithful one. For the avowed ſinner cannot conceal his crimes from himſelf; and he is ſenſible, that he muſt aſſuredly be dead to the Lord: The juſt man, although ignorant whether he merits love or hatred of his maſter, enjoys nevertheleſs a conſcience free from reproach; but the cold and unfaithful ſoul is involved in a ſtate of a continual and inexplicable myſtery to itſelf. For this lukewarmneſs in the ways of God, enfeebling in us the lights of faith, and ſtrengthening our paſſions, increaſes our darkneſs: Every infidelity is like an additional cloud, overſpreading the mind and heart, which darkens to our ſight the truths of ſalvation: In this manner, the heart is gradually enveloped; the conſcience becomes embarraſſed; the lights of the mind are weakened: You are no longer that ſpiritual Chriſtian, capable of a proper judgment. Inſenſibly you adopt maxims in ſecret, which, as you think, diminiſh your guilt: the blindneſs increaſes in the ſame proportion as the lukewarmneſs.

The more you admit of this relaxation, in a more altered light do your duties and rules appear: What formerly appeared eſſential, no longer appears but a vain ſcruple: The omiſſions, which, in the period of fervour for duty and religion, would have excited in you the warmeſt compunctions, are now no longer regarded even as faults: The

principles, the judgment, the lights of the mind, are all changed.

Now in this ſituation, who has told you, that in the judgment which you form on the nature of your infidelities, and your daily departure from virtue, you do not deceive yourſelves? Who has told you, that the errors which you think ſo ſlight, are in reality ſo; and that the diſtant boundaries which you preſcribe to guilt, and within which every thing to you appears venial, are really the limits of the law? Alas! the moſt enlightened guides know not how to diſtinguiſh clearly in a cold and unbelieving conſcience. Theſe are what I may call the evils of that languor in which we know nothing; where the wiſeſt of us can ſay nothing with certainty; and of which the ſecret cauſe is always an enigma. You are ſenſible yourſelves, that in this ſtate of relaxation, you experience in your hearts certain doubts and embarraſſments, which you can never ſufficiently clear up: That in your conſciences there always remains ſomething ſecret and inexplicable, which you never wiſh to ſearch into, or above half expoſe. Theſe are not exaggerations; it is the real ſtate and bottom of your ſoul which you feel a reſerve to lay open: You are ſenſible, that even when proſtrating yourſelves before the Almighty, the confeſſion of your guilt never entirely correſponds with the moſt intimate diſpoſitions of your heart; that it never paints your internal ſituation ſuch as in reality it is; and, in a word, that there always exiſts in your heart ſomething more criminal, than what in any ſtatement of it you can bring yourſelves to avow. And, indeed, how can you be certain, that in thoſe continual ſelf-gratifications; in that effeminacy of manners which compoſes your life; in that attention to every thing which may flatter the ſenſes, or remove diſquiet from you; to ſacrifice to indolence and lazi-

neſs

neſs, all which appears not eſſential in your duties; how can you be certain, I ſay, that your ſelf-love is not arrived at that fatal point, which ſerves to give it dominion over your heart, and forever baniſh from it Chriſtian charity? Who is able to inform you, in theſe frequent and voluntary infidelities, where, comforted by their pretended inſignificancy, you oppoſe the internal grace which endeavours to turn you from them; you continually act contrary to your own reaſon and judgment; whether this internal contempt of the voice of God; this formal and daily abuſe of your own lights and grace from God be not an outrage upon the divine goodneſs; a criminal contempt of his gifts; a wickedneſs in your deviations from virtue, which leaves no excuſe; and a deliberate preference to your paſſions and yourſelves over Jeſus Chriſt, which can alone proceed from a heart where the love of all order and righteouſneſs is extinguiſhed? Who can tell you, if in theſe recollections where your liſtleſs mind has a thouſand times dwelt upon objects or events dangerous to modeſty, your indolence in combating them has not been criminal; and if the efforts which you afterwards made, were not an artifice of ſelf-love, in order to diſguiſe their criminalty, and quiet you on the indulgence you had already yielded to your crimes? Who would dare to determine, if, in theſe ſecret antipathies and animoſities, which you give yourſelves but little trouble to reſtrain, (and that always more for the ſake of appearances than through piety,) you have never exceeded that ſlippery line, beyond which dwell hatred, and death to the ſoul! If, in that exceſs of ſenſibility, which in general accompanies all your afflictions, infirmities, loſſes, and diſgraces, thoſe which you call feelings, attached and inevitable to nature, are not irregularities of the heart, and a revolt againſt the decrees of Providence? If, in all thoſe attentions, and eagerneſſes with which we ſee you occupied, to manage either

either the intereſts of your worldly affairs, or the preſervation of a vain beauty, there is not either as much forwardneſs as may amount to the crime of illegal ambition, or complaiſance for yourſelf, and deſire of pleaſing, as may ſully your heart with the guilt of ſenſuality? Great God! who haſt well diſcerned, as thy ſervant Job formerly remarked, the fatal limits which ſeparate life from death, and light from darkneſs, in the heart; theſe are the gulfs and abyſſes over which mankind, little inſtructed in them, muſt tremble; and of which Thou reſerveſt the manifeſtation till the terrible day of they vengeance ſhall arrive. Second reaſon, drawn from the uncertainty of the rules, which leaves the ſtate of a lukewarm ſoul very ſuſpicious, and even renders it incapable of knowing itſelf.

But a final reaſon, which to me appears ſtill more deciſive, and more dreadful to the lukewarm ſoul, is there not being an appearance from which we can preſume, that it ſtill preſerves the ſanctifying grace; on the contrary, every thing induces us to ſuppoſe it forfeited; that is to ſay, that of all the ſymptoms, of an habitual and living charity, there is not a veſtige of one in it.

For, my brethren, the firſt character of charity is to fill us with that ſpirit of adoption in children, which leads us to love God as our heavenly Father, to love his law, and the juſtice of his commandments; and to dread the forfeiture of his love, more than all the evils with which he threatens us.

Now, the attention alone with which a lukewarm ſoul examines whether an offence be venial, or extends further; of diſputing with God every article he may refuſe him, without actual guilt; of ſtudying the law, only for the purpoſe

poſe of knowing to what degree it may be violated; of unceaſingly preferring the intereſts of his own cupidity to thoſe of grace; and always juſtifying thoſe things which flatter the paſſions, in oppoſition to the rules which check or forbid them; this attention, I ſay can only proceed from a heart deſtitute of faith and charity; from a heart in which the Spirit of God, that ſpirit of love and kindneſs, apparently no longer reigns. For no children but the prodigal, are capable of quibbling in this manner with their father and protector; of exerciſing to the utmoſt length of ſeverity any claims they may have, and of ſeizing all they may think themſelves entitled to.

Now, in order to give this reflection all its weight: That diſpoſition, which deliberately allows itſelf every infidelity, which will not, it believes, be followed by eternal puniſhment, is the diſpoſition of a ſlave and hireling; that is to ſay, that could they promiſe themſelves the ſame impunity and indulgence from the Almighty, for the tranſgreſſion of the eſſential points of the law, they would violate them with the ſame difference as they violate the leaſt; for, were cruel and avowed revenge, calumny of the blackeſt nature, and criminal attachments, to be attended in futurity with no worſe conſequences than ſlight and momentary reſentments, accidental and careleſs evil-ſpeaking, or too much ſelf-love, they would feel no more horror in the commiſſion of the former, than the laſt mentioned crimes; that is to ſay, that when faithful to the commandments, it is not from a love of righteouſneſs, but the dread of that puniſhment, which would attend their infraction; it is not to order and to the law that they ſubmit themſelves, it is to their chaſtiſements; it is not the Lord they have in view, it is themſelves: For while his glory alone is intereſted, and no ſerious conſequences may be expected to follow our infidelities,

ties, from their apparent ſlightneſs, we are not afraid of diſpleaſing him; we even juſtify to ourſelves in ſecret theſe kind of tranſgreſſions, by ſaying, that notwithſtanding they offend, and are diſpleaſing to the Lord, yet they bring not death, nor eternal puniſhment to the ſoul: We are not affected by what regards only him; his glory goes for nothing in the diſtinction we make betwixt actions allowed or forbidden; our intereſt alone regulates our fidelity; and nothing can warm our coldneſs, but the dread of everlaſting puniſhment. We are even delighted at the impunity of thoſe trivial tranſgreſſions; of being able to gratify our inclinations, without any greater misfortune attending, than the diſpleaſure of the Almighty: We love this wretched liberty, which ſeems to leave us the right of being unpuniſhed, though unfaithful: We are the apologiſts of it; we carry it even further, than in reality it goes: We wiſh all to be venial; gaming, dreſs, ſenſual pleaſures, paſſion, animoſities, public ſpectacles, what ſhall I ſay? We would wiſh this freedom to be univerſal; that nothing which gratifies our appetites ſhould be puniſhed; that the Almighty were neither juſt, nor the avenger of iniquity; and that we might yield ourſelves up to the gratification of every paſſion, and violate the ſanctity of his law, without any dread of the ſeverity of his juſtice. Provided a lukewarm ſoul will deſcend to an examination of itſelf, it will feel, that this is truly the principle of its heart, and its real diſpoſition.

Now, I aſk you, is this the ſituation of a ſoul in which the ſanctifying charity and grace is ſtill preſerved; that is to ſay, a ſoul which loves its Maker more than the world, more than all created beings, more than all pleaſures or riches, more than itſelf? Of a ſoul which can feel no joy but in his poſſeſſion; which dreads only his loſs, and knows

no

no misfortune but that of his diſpleaſure? Does the charity you flatter yourſelves ſtill to preſerve, ſeek, in this manner, its proper intereſt? Does it regard, as nothing, the diſpleaſure of him it loves, provided its infidelities remain unpuniſhed? Does it think of diſputing, like you, every day, to what degree it may ſafely offend him, in order to take its meaſures accordingly, and then allow itſelf every tranſgreſſion, to which impunity is attached: Does it ſee nothing amiable in its God, or capable of attaching the heart, but his chaſtiſements? Were he not even an Almighty and an avenging God, would it be leſs affected by his infinite mercies, his truth, holineſs, wiſdom, fatherly tenderneſs, and protection? Ah! lukewarm and infidel ſoul, Thou loveſt him no longer: Thou loveſt, thou liveſt only for thyſelf. The ſmall remains of fidelity, which ſtill keep thee from ſin, are nothing but a fund of ſloth, timidity, and ſelf-love. Thou wiſheſt to live in peace with thyſelf: Thou dreadeſt the embarraſſments of a paſſion, and the remorſe of a ſullied conſcience: iniquity is become a fatigue, and that alone diſpleaſes thee with it: Thou loveſt thine own eaſe; and that is thy ſole religion: Indolence is the only barrier which ſtops thee, and all thy virtue is limited to thyſelf. Aſſuredly, thou wouldeſt wiſh to know, whether this infidelity be a venial tranſgreſſion, or if it extends further. Thou acknowledgeſt, that it diſpleaſes God, (for that point admits of no doubt,) yet is that not ſufficient to turn thee from it? Thou wouldeſt wiſh to know, whether it ſo far diſpleaſes him, as to provoke his everlaſting wrath? Ah! Thou ſeeſt very well, that this inveſtigation tends to nothing by thyſelf; that thy diſpoſition leads thee to think guilt nothing, as an offence, and a diſpleaſure to God; a powerful reaſon, however, why it ſhould be deteſtable to thee: That thou

no

no longer ſerveſt the Lord in truth and in charity; that thy pretended virtue is only a natural timidity; which dare not expoſe itſelf to the terrible threatenings of the law; that thou art nothing but a vile and wretched ſlave, to reſtrain whom, it is neceſſary to keep ſcourges continually in thy ſight: that thou reſembleſt that unfaithful ſervant, who ſecreted his talent, becauſe he knew that his maſter was ſevere; and, but for that reaſon, would have waſted it in diſſipation; and that in the preparation of the heart, to which alone the Almighty looketh, thou hateſt his law: Thou loveſt every thing it forbids: Thou art no longer in charity: Thou art a child of death and perdition.

The ſecond character of charity is to be timorous, and to magnify to ourſelves our ſmalleſt deviations: not that charity deceives or conceals from us the truth; but diſengaging the ſoul from the ſenſes, it purifies our view of faith, and renders it more quick-ſighted in ſpiritual affairs; and beſides, whatever is in the ſmalleſt degree diſpleaſing to the only object of our love, appears ſerious and conſiderable to the ſoul which loves. Thus charity is always humble, timid, and diſtruſtful of itſelf; unceaſingly agitated by its pious perplexities, which leave it in ſuſpenſe reſpecting its real ſtate, always alarmed by thoſe delicacies of grace, which make it tremble at every action; which make a kind of martyrdom of love, from the uncertainty in which they leave it; and by which, however, it is purified. Theſe are not the vain and puerile ſcruples, which we blame in weak minds: They are thoſe pious fears of charity and of grace, inſeparable from every faithful and religious ſoul: It works its ſalvation with fear and trembling; and even frequently regards as crimes, actions, which are often virtues in the ſight of God; and which at moſt, can only be regarded as ſimple weakneſſes.

Theſe

Theſe are the holy perplexities of charity, which derive their ſource even from the lights of faith. This path has, in all ages, been the path of the juſt.

Yet nevertheleſs it is that pretended charity, of which in the midſt of a vicious life, and of all your infidelities, you believe yourſelves ſtill poſſeſſed, that makes them appear ſlight to you: It is that charity itſelf, which you ſuppoſe not to have loſt, that comforts and encourages you; that diminiſhes your faults in your own ſight, and fixes you in a ſtate of peace and ſecurity: In a word, that not only baniſhes from your heart all thoſe pious alarms, inſeparable from real piety, but makes you regard them as weakneſſes, and even the exceſſes of piety. Now tell me, I beg of you, is not that an inconſiſtency? Does charity contradict itſelf in that manner? Or can you place much dependence on a love, which ſo nearly reſembles hatred?

The laſt character of charity, is to be active and diligent in the ways of God. We find how much the Apoſtle dwells on its activity and fecundity in the heart of a Chriſtian: It operates wherever it is; it cannot, ſay the ſaints, be idle: It is a celeſtial fire, which no power can hinder from ſhewing itſelf, and from acting: It may ſometimes indeed be overwhelmed, and greatly weakened, by the multitude of our weakneſſes, but, while not entirely extinguiſhed, there always proceed from it, as I may ſay, ſome ſparks of ſighs, wiſhes, lamentations, efforts, and deeds. The Holy Sacrament reanimates it, prayer arouſes it; pious reading, affliction, diſgrace, bodily infirmity, all rekindle it, when not utterly extinguiſhed. It is mentioned in the ſecond book of the Maccabees, that the ſacred fire, which the Jews had concealed during their captivity, was found at their return apparently extinct. But

as the ſurface alone was obſcured, and the ſacred fire ſtill internally preſerved all its virtue, ſcarcely was it expoſed to the rays of the ſun, when they ſaw it inſtantaneouſly rekindle, and preſent to their ſight a brightneſs altogether new, and an activity altogether aſtoniſhing.

Behold, my brethren, a faithful repreſentation of the coldneſs, of a truly juſt ſoul; and which likewiſe would be your caſe, had the multitude of your infidelities done no more than cover and relax, as I may ſay, without extinguiſhing the ſacred fire of charity within you: Behold, I ſay, what ought to be your ſituation, when you approach the Holy Sacrament, or liſten to the word of God. When Jeſus Chriſt, the Sun of Righteouſneſs, darts upon you ſome rays of his grace and light, and inſpires you with holy deſires, your heart ought then to be ſeen rekindled, and your fervour renewed: You then ought to appear all fire and animation in the practice of your duty, and aſtoniſh even the moſt confident witneſſes of your former life, by the renovation of your morals and zeal.

Alas! nothing, however, reanimates you. Even the holy Sacrament leaves you all your coldneſs: The words of the goſpel which you liſten to, fall upon your heart, like corn upon a ſterile land, where it immediately dies: The ſentiments of ſalvation, which grace operates within you, are never followed with any effect, in the melioration of your morals; you continually drag on in the ſame indolence and languor; you depart from the holy altar equally cold, equally inſenſible, as you approached it: We ſee not in you theſe renewals of zeal, piety, and fervour, ſo common in juſt ſouls, and of which the motives are to be found in their deviations from duty. What you were yeſterday, you are to-day: The ſame infidelities, the ſame weakneſſes:

weakneſſes.: You advance not a ſingle ſtep in the road to ſalvation; all the fire of heaven could ſcarcely rekindle in the bottom of your heart this pretended charity, upon which you depend ſo much. Ah! my dear hearer, how much I dread that it is extinct, and that you are dead in the ſight of the Lord! I wiſh not to anticipate the ſecret judgments of God upon the conſciences; but I muſt tell you, that your ſtate is very far from being ſafe; I even tell you, that if we are to judge by the rules of faith, you are in diſgrace with, and hated of the Lord: I tell you likewiſe, that a coldneſs ſo durable and conſtant, cannot ſubſiſt with a principle of heavenly and eternal life, which always, from time to time at leaſt, betrays external movements and ſigns, raiſes, animates itſelf, and takes wing, as if to diſengage itſelf from the ſhackles which weigh it down; and that a charity ſo mute, ſo indolent, and ſo conſtantly inſenſible, exiſts no more.

But the great danger of this ſtate, my brethren, is, that a lukewarm ſoul is ſo without ſcruple: It feels that it might carry its fervour and fidelity to a much greater length, but it looks upon that zeal, and that exactitude, as a perfection, and a grace, reſerved only for certain ſouls, and not as a general duty; in this manner they fix themſelves in that degree of coldneſs into which they are fallen; they have not made, nor ſcarcely attempted, the ſmalleſt progreſs in virtue, ſince the ardours of converſion. It would appear, that having exhauſted all their fervour againſt the criminal paſſions with which they had at firſt to combat, they imagine, that nothing now remains, but to enjoy in peace the fruits of their victory; a thouſand damages which ſtill remain from their firſt ſhipwreck, they think no more of repairing: So far from endeavouring to repreſs a thouſand weakneſſes, and corrupted inclinations, left

left them by their firſt irregularities, they love and cheriſh them. The Holy Sacrament no longer reanimates or invigorates their faith; it only amuſes it. Converſion is no longer the end they propoſe; they believe it already done: And, alas! their confeſſions even to the Almighty, are more for the purpoſe of amuſing and lulling their conſciences, than the effects of piety, and real contrition.

We impoſe greatly upon ourſelves, my brethren, with regard to our conſciences reproaching us with nothing criminal; for we ſee not, that it is even that tranquillity which conſtitutes the danger, and perhaps the guilt likewiſe of it. We believe ourſelves in ſecurity in our ſtate, becauſe it perhaps offers to our ſight more innocence and regularity, than that of diſorderly ſouls; and indeed, we wiſh not to conceive how a life purely natural, ſhould not be a life of grace and of faith; or that a ſtate of habitual idleneſs and ſenſual gratification, ſhould be a ſtate of ſin and death, in a Chriſtian life.

Thus, my dear hearer, you whom this diſcourſe regards, reanimate yourſelf without ceaſing in the ſpirit of your vocation; according to the advice of the Apoſtle, raiſe yourſelf every day by prayer, by mortification of the ſenſes, by vigilance over your paſſions, and by a continual retroſpection to, and inveſtigation of your own heart; that firſt grace, which operates to draw you from the errors and wanderings of the world, and make you enter into the paths of God. Depend upon it, that piety has nothing ſure or conſoling but fidelity; that in relaxing from it, you only augment your troubles, becauſe you multiply your bonds; that in retrenching from your duty, zeal, fervour and exactitude, you likewiſe retrench all its ſweets and pleaſures; that in depriving your ſtate of fidelity, you deprive

deprive it of ſecurity; and that in limiting yourſelf, ſimply to ſhun iniquity, you loſe the moſt precious fruits of virtue.

And after all, ſince you have already ſacrificed the eſſential, why will you ſtill attach yourſelves to the frivolous parts? After having accompliſhed the moſt laborious and painful exertions towards ſalvation, muſt you periſh for not finiſhing the ſlighteſt and moſt eaſy? When Naaman, little convinced, becauſe the prophet, for the cure of his leproſy, had only ordered him to bath in the waters of Jordan, retired full of contempt for the man of God, and believing it impoſſible that his recovery could be accompliſhed by ſo ſimple a remedy, the people who accompanied him made him ſenſible of his error, by ſaying to him, "But, "maſter, had the prophet bid thee do ſome great thing, "wouldeſt thou not have done it? How much rather then, "when he ſaith to thee, waſh and be clean?"

And now, my brethren, attend to what I have to ſay, while I finiſh this diſcourſe. You have abandoned the world, and the idols which you formerly worſhipped in it: You are come from afar into the paths of God: You have had ſo many paſſions to overcome, and obſtacles to ſurmount; ſo many things to ſacrifice, and difficult exertions to make; there remains only one ſtep more to accompliſh, which is a faithful and conſtant vigilance over yourſelves. If a ſacrifice of the criminal paſſions were not already made, and you were required to do it, you would not, I believe, heſitate a moment; coſt what it might, you would make it: And in the meanwhile, when ſimple purifications are only demanded of you; nay, when you are required as I may ſay, almoſt the ſame things which you do, but only to be practiſed with more fervour, fidelity, faith, and vigilance,

lance, are you excuſable in declining them? Why will you render uſeleſs all your former efforts, by the refuſal of a thing ſo eaſy? Why ſhould you have renounced the world, and all its criminal pleaſures, only to find in piety the ſame rock, which by flying from ſin you thought to have eſcaped? And would it not be lamentable, if, after having ſacrificed to God the principal parts, you ſhould loſe yourſelves, by wiſhing ſtill to diſpute with him a thouſand little ſacrifices, much leſs painful to the heart and to nature.

Finiſh then in us, O my God! that which thy grace has already begun; triumph over our languors, and our weakneſſeſs, ſince thou haſt already triumphed over our crimes; give us a heart fervent and faithful, ſince thou haſt already deprived us of a criminal and corrupted one; inſpire us with that willing ſubmiſſion which the juſt poſſeſs, ſince thou haſt extinguiſhed in us that pride and obſtinacy which occaſion ſo many ſinners: Leave not, O my God! thy work unfiniſhed; and ſince thou haſt already made us enter into the holy career of ſalvation, render us worthy of the holy crown promiſed to thoſe who ſhall have legally fought for it.

Now to God, &c. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON V.

THE CERTAINTY OF THE LOSS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IN A STATE OF LUKEWARMNESS.

LUKE iv. 38.

And he roſe out of the Synagogue, and entered into Simon's houſe: and Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever: and they beſought him for her.

SINCE Simon thought the preſence of our Saviour neceſſary for the cure of his mother-in-law, it would appear my brethren, that the evil was preſſing, and threatened an approaching death; the uſual remedies muſt have been found ineffectual, and nothing but a miracle could operate her cure, and draw her from the gates of death: Nevertheleſs, the Scriptures mention her being attacked by only a common fever. On every other occaſion, we never find that they had recourſe to our Saviour, but to raiſe people from the grave, to cure paralytics, reſtore ſight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf, from their birth: In a word, to cure diſeaſes, incurable by any other, than the Soverſign Maſter of Life and Death: In this inſtance, he is called upon, to reſtore health to a perſon attacked by a ſimple fever.

Whence comes it, that the Almighty Power is employed on ſo ſlight an occaſion? It is, that this fever being a natural image of lukewarmneſs in the ways of God, the Holy

Holy Spirit has wiſhed to make us underſtand by it, that this diſeaſe apparently ſo ſlight, and of which they dread not the danger; this lukewarmneſs, ſo common in piety, is a diſeaſe, which inevitably deſtroys the ſoul, and that a miracle is neceſſary to reſcue it from death.

Yes, my brethren, of all the maxims of Chriſtian morality, there is none upon which experience allows us leſs to deceive ourſelves, than the one which aſſures us, that contempt for the ſmalleſt points of our duty inſenſibly leads us to a tranſgreſſion of the moſt eſſential; and that, negligence in the ways of God is never far from a total loſs of righteouſneſs. He who deſpiſes the ſmaller objects of religion, ſays the Holy Spirit, will gradually fall; he who deſpiſes them, that is to ſay, who deliberately violates them; who lays down as it were, a plan of this conduct; for, if through weakneſs or ſurpriſe you fail in them ſometimes, it is the common deſtiny of the juſt, and this diſcourſe would no longer regard you; but to deſpiſe them in the ſenſe already mentioned, which can happen only with lukewarm and unfaithful ſouls, is a path which muſt terminate in the loſs of righteouſneſs. In the firſt place, becauſe the ſpecial grace neceſſary towards perſeverance in virtue is no longer granted. Secondly, Becauſe the paſſions are ſtrengthened which lead us on to vice. Thirdly, Becauſe all the external ſuccours of piety become uſeleſs.

Let us inveſtigate theſe three reflections: They contain important inſtructions in the detail of a Chriſtian life: Uſeful, not only to thoſe who make profeſſion of a public and avowed piety, but likewiſe to thoſe who make all virtue to conſiſt in that regularity of conduct, and propriety of behaviour, which even the world requires.

PART

PART I.—It is a truth of ſalvation, ſays a holy Father, that the innocence of even the moſt upright has occaſion for the continual aſſiſtance of grace. Man, delivered up to ſin, by the wickedneſs of his nature, no longer finds in himſelf but principles of error, and ſources of corruption; Righteouſneſs and truth, originally born with us, are now become as ſtrangers; all our inclinations, revolted againſt God and his law, in ſpite of ourſelves, drag us on towards illicit objects; in ſo much, that to return to the law, and ſubmit our heart to order, it is neceſſary to reſiſt, without ceaſing, the impreſſions of the ſenſes; to break our warmeſt inclinations, and to harden ourſelves continually againſt ourſelves. There is no duty but what now coſts us ſomething; no precept in the law, but combats ſome of our paſſions; no ſtep in the paths of God againſt which our heart does not revolt.

To this load of corruption, which renders duty ſo difficult and irkſome, and iniquity ſo natural, add the ſnares which ſurround us, the examples which entice us, the objects which effeminate us, the occaſions which ſurpriſe us, the compliances which weaken us, the afflictions which diſcourage us, the properties which corrupt us, the ſituations which blind us, and the contradictions which we experience; every thing around us is indeed only one continued temptation. I ſpeak not of the miſeries which are natural to us; or the particular oppoſition to order and righteouſneſs, which our paſt morals, and our firſt paſſions have left in our hearts: That love for the world and its pleaſures; that diſlike to virtue and its maxims; that empire of the ſenſes, fortified by a voluptuous life; that invincible indolence, to which every thing is a burden, and to which whatever is a burden, becomes almoſt impoſſible; that pride, which knows neither how to bend or break;

that inconſtancy of heart, incapable of end or uniformity, which preſently tires of itſelf; which cannot ſubmit to rule, becauſe that it is always the ſame; which wiſhes, and wiſhes not; paſſes in a moment from the loweſt ſtate of dejection, to a vain and childiſh joy, and leaves ſcarcely the interval of a moment betwixt the ſincereſt reſolution, and the infidelity which violates it.

Now, in a ſituation ſo miſerable, what, O my God! can the moſt juſt accompliſh, delivered up to his own weakneſs, and all the ſnares which ſurround him; bearing in his heart the ſource of all his errors, and in his mind the principles of every illuſion? The grace of Jeſus Chriſt, therefore, can alone deliver him from ſo many miſeries; enlighten him in the midſt of ſo much darkneſs; ſupport him under ſo many difficulties; reſtrain him from following the dictates of ſo many rapid deſires, and ſtrengthen him againſt ſo many attacks. If left a moment to himſelf, he inevitably ſtumbles, and is loſt: If an Almighty hand ceaſes an inſtant to retain him, he is carried down by the ſtream: Our conſiſtency in virtue, is therefore a continual grace and miracle; all our ſteps in the ways of God are new motions of the Holy Spirit; that is to ſay, of that inviſible guide, which impels and leads us on. All our pious actions are gifts of divine mercy; ſince every proper uſe of our liberty comes from him, and he crowns his gifts in recompenſing our merits: All the moments of our Chriſtian life are like a new creation, therefore, in faith, and in piety; that is to ſay, (this ſpiritual creation does nor ſuppoſe a non-exiſtence in the juſt, but a principle of grace, and a liberty which co-operates with it,) that as, in the order of nature, we ſhould again return to our non-entity, if the Creator ceaſed an inſtant to preſerve the being he has given us; in the life of grace, we would again fall into

into ſin and death, did the Redeemer ceaſe a ſingle moment to continue, by new ſuccours, the gift of righteouſneſs and holineſs, with which he hath embelliſhed our ſoul: Such is the weakneſs of man, and ſuch is his continual dependence on the grace of Jeſus Chriſt. The fidelity of the juſt ſoul is, therefore, the fruit of continual aids of grace; but it is likewiſe the principle: It is grace alone which can operate the fidelity of the juſt; and it is the fidelity alone of the juſt, which merits the preſervation and increaſe of grace in the heart.

For, my brethren, the ways of God towards us being full of equity and wiſdom, there muſt neceſſarily be ſome order in the diſtribution of his gifts and grace: The Lord muſt communicate himſelf more abundantly to the ſoul, which faithfully prepares its heart for his ways; he muſt beſtow more continual marks of his protection and mercy on the upright heart, which gives him conſtant proof of love and fidelity; and the ſervant who improves his talent, muſt neceſſarily be recompenſed in proportion to the profit he has known how to reap from it: It is juſt on the contrary, that a lukewarm and unfaithful heart, who ſerves his God with negligence and diſguſt, ſhould find the Almighty cold and diſguſted towards him: The miſery inſeparable from coldneſs, is, therefore, the privation of the grace of protection. If you become cold, the Almighty becomes ſo towards you; if you limit yourſelf with regard to him, to thoſe eſſential duties, which you cannot refuſe him without guilt, he confines himſelf with regard to you, to thoſe general ſuccours, which will not ſupport you far: He retires from you, in proportion as you retire from him; and the meaſure of fidelity with which you ſerve him, is the meaſure of protection you may expect to receive.

Nothing

Nothing can be more equitable than this conduct; for you enter into judgment with your God. You neglect every opportunity where you might give him proofs of your fidelity: You diſpute every thing with him, of which you think you could avoid the payment: You carefully watch, leſt you do any thing for him, beyond what duty requires. It appears, you ſay to him, what he formerly ſaid to the unfaithful ſervant: Take that thine is; and go thy way. You reckon with God, as I may ſay: All your attention is engaged in preſcribing limits to the right he has over your heart; and all his attention likewiſe, if I may be permitted to ſpeak in this manner, is to put bounds to his mercies to your ſoul, and to pay your difference with the ſame: Love is the price of love alone; and if you do not ſufficiently feel all the terror and extent of this truth, allow me to explain to you its conſequences.

The firſt is, that this ſtate of lukewarmneſs and infidelity removing the ſoul from the grace of protection, leaves him, as I may ſay, empty of God, and in the hands, as it were, of his own weakneſs: He may undoubtedly, with the common ſuccours left him, ſtill preſerve the fidelity he owes to God: He has always enough to ſupport him in well-doing; but his lukewarmneſs deprives him of the ability to apply them to any purpoſe; that is to ſay, that he is ſtill aided by thoſe ſuccours, which may enable him to go on; but no longer by thoſe with which he may infallibly perſevere; there is no peril, therefore, in this ſituation, but makes a dangerous impreſſion on him, and leads him to the brink of ruin.

I grant that a happy natural diſpoſition, ſome remains of modeſty, and fear of God, a conſcience ſtill afraid of guilt, and a reputation to preſerve, may for ſome time defend him againſt

againſt himſelf; but as theſe reſources, drawn moſtly from nature, cannot extend far; as the ſenſual objects, in the midſt of which he lives, make every day new wounds in his heart, and grace leſs abundant, repairs not the loſs, alas! his ſtrength exhauſts every moment, faith relaxes, and truth is obſcured; the more he advances, the worſe he becomes: Such ſouls feel perfectly, that they no longer retire from the world and its dangers, equally innocent, as formerly; that they carry their weakneſſes and compliance much farther; that they encroach upon limits which they formerly reſpected; that looſe converſations find them more indulgent, evil-ſpeaking more favourable, pleaſure leſs guarded, and the world more anxious for it; that they bring into it, a heart already half-gained; that they are ſenſible of their loſſes, but feel nothing to repair them; in a word, that God is almoſt withdrawn from them; and there is no longer any barrier, but their own weakneſs, betwixt guilt and them. Behold the ſituation in which you are; and from that, judge of the one in which you will ſoon be.

I know that this ſtate of relaxation and infidelity troubles and diſturbs you; that you ſay every day, that nothing can beſtow greater happineſs, than a detachment from every thing worldly; and that you envy the deſtiny of thoſe Chriſtians who give themſelves up to God without reſerve, and no longer keep any terms with the world. But you are deceived; it is not the faith, or the fervour of theſe faithful Chriſtians, you envy; you only covet their lot; that happineſs and peace, which they enjoy, in the ſervice of their Maker, and which you are incapable of partaking; you only envy them that inſenſibility, and happy indifference to which they have attained, for the world and every thing it eſteems; your love for which occaſions all your troubles, remorſes, and ſecret anguiſh; but you envy them

them not the ſacrifices they were under the neceſſity of making, to arrive at their preſent ſtate of peace and tranquillity: You envy them not the trials they have undergone, in order to merit the precious gift of a lively and fervent faith: You envy the happineſs of their ſtate; but you would not wiſh it to coſt you the illuſion and ſenſuality of your own.

The ſecond conſequence I draw from the refuſal of the grace of protection to the lukewarm Chriſtian, is, that the yoke of our Saviour, to him, becomes burdenſome, hard, and inſupportable. For, my brethren, by the irregularity of our nature, having loſt all taſte for righteouſneſs and truth, which, in a ſtate of innocence, formed the happineſs of man, we no longer have any feeling or deſire, but for objects which gratify the ſenſes and paſſions. The duties of the law of God, which recal us from the ſenſes to the ſpirit, and make us ſacrifice the preſent impreſſions of pleaſure to the hope of future promiſes: Theſe duties, I ſay, preſently fatigue our weakneſs, becauſe they are continual efforts we make againſt ourſelves. It requires the unction of grace, therefore, to ſoften the yoke; it is neceſſary that grace ſpread ſecret conſolations over its bitterneſs, and change the ſadneſs of duty into a holy and ſenſible joy. Now the lukewarm ſoul, deprived of this unction, feels only the weight of the yoke, without the conſolations which ſoften it: In this manner, all the duties of piety and religion become inſipid to you; works of ſalvation become weariſome; your conſcience, reſtleſs and embarraſſed, by your relaxations and infidelities, of which you cannot juſtify the innocence, no longer allows you to enjoy either peace or joy in the ſervice of God. You feel all the weight of the duties to which ſome remains of faith, and love of eaſe, hinder you from being unfaithful; but you

you feel not the ſecret teſtimony of a clear conſcience, which ſoothes and ſupports the fervent Chriſtian: You ſhun, perhaps, certain occaſions of pleaſure, where innocence is ſure of being ſhipwrecked, but you only experience in the retreat which divides you from them, a wearifomeneſs, and a more lively deſire for the ſame pleaſures, from which you have forced yourſelf to refrain. You pray, but prayer is no longer but a fatigue: You frequent the ſociety of virtuous perſons, but their company becomes ſo irkſome, as almoſt to diſguſt you with virtue itſelf: The ſlighteſt violence you do upon your inclinations for the ſake of heaven, coſts you ſuch efforts, that the pleaſures and amuſements of the world muſt be applied to, to refreſh and invigorate you after this fatigue; the ſmalleſt mortification exhauſts your body; caſts uneaſineſs and chagrin through your temper, and only conſoles you, by an immediate determination, to abandon its practice. You live unhappy, and without conſolation, becauſe you deprive yourſelf of a world you love, and ſubſtitute in its place duties which you love not: Your whole life is but a melancholy fatigue, and a perpetual diſguſt with yourſelf: You reſemble the Iſraelites in the deſert; diſguſted, on the one part, with the manna upon which the Lord had ordered them to ſubſiſt; and on the other, not daring to return to the food of the Egyptians, which they ſtill loved, and which the dread alone of the Almighty's anger induced them to deny themſelves. Now this ſtate of violence cannot endure; we ſoon tire of any remains of virtue, which do not quiet the heart, comfort the reaſon, and even flatter our ſelf-love: We ſoon throw off the remains of a yoke, which weighs us down; and which we no longer carry through love, but for decency's ſake. It is ſo melancholy to be nothing at all, as I may ſay: Neither juſt nor worldly; attached neither to the world nor to Jeſus Chriſt;

Chriſt; enjoying neither the pleaſures of the ſenſes, nor thoſe of grace; that it is impoſſible this wearifome ſituation of indifference and neutrality can be durable. The heart, and particularly thoſe of a certain deſcription, requires an avowed object to occupy and intereſt it; If not God, it will ſoon be the world: A heart, lively, eager, always in extremes, and ſuch as the generality of men poſſeſs, cannot be fixed, but by the feelings; and to be continually diſguſted with virtue, ſhows a heart already prepared to yield to the attractions of vice.

I know, in the firſt place, That there are lazy and indolent ſouls, who ſeem to keep themſelves in this ſtate of equilibration and inſenſibility; who offer nothing decided, either for the world or virtue; who appear equally diſtant, by their diſpoſitions, either from the ardours of a faithful piety, or the exceſſes of profane guilt; who, in the midſt of the pleaſures of the world, preſerve a fund of retention and regularity, which proves the exiſtence of ſome remains of virtue; and in the midſt of their religious duties, a fund of careleſſneſs and laxity, which ſtill breathes the air and maxims of the world. Theſe are indolent and tranquil hearts, animated in nothing; in whom indolence almoſt ſupplies the place of virtue; and who, notwithſtanding they never arrive at that degree of piety, which the faithful accompliſh, never proceed to thoſe lengths in iniquity, which criminal and abandoned ſouls do.

I know it, my brethren, but I likewiſe know, that this indolence of heart defends us only from crimes which would coſt us trouble; makes us avoid only thoſe pleaſures which we would be obliged to purchaſe, at the expence of our tranquillity, and which the love of eaſe alone prevents us from enjoying. It leaves us virtuous only in the eyes of men,

men, who confound the indolence which dreads embarraſſment with the piety which flies from vice; but it does not defend us againſt ourſelves; againſt a thouſand illicit deſires; a thouſand criminal compliances; a thouſand paſſions, more ſecret, and leſs painful, becauſe ſhut up in the heart; from jealouſies, which devour us; ambition, which domineers over us; pride, which corrupts us; a deſire of pleaſure, which engroſſes us; an exceſs of ſelf-love, which is the principle of all our conduct, and infects all our actions; that is to ſay, that this indolence delivers up our heart to all its weakneſſes; at the ſame time that it ſerves as a check againſt the more ſtriking and tumultuous paſſions, and that, what appears only indolence in the eyes of men, is always before God a ſecret ignominy and corruption.

I know, in the ſecond place, that this love of piety, and this unction which ſoftens the practice of religious duties, is a gift frequently refuſed even to holy and faithful Chriſtians. But there are three eſſential differences betwixt the faithful ſoul, to whom the Lord denies the ſenſible conſolations of piety; and the lukewarm and worldly one, whom the weight of the yoke oppreſſes, and who is incapable of enjoying the things of God.

The firſt is, That a faithful Chriſtian, in ſpite of his repugnancies, preſerving a firm and ſolid faith, finds his ſtate, and the exemption from guilt in which he lives, ſince touched by God, a thouſand times more happy, than that in which he lived when delivered up to his paſſions; and penetrated with horror at his former exceſſes, he would not change his lot, or re-engage himſelf in his former vices, for all the pleaſures of the earth: In place of which, the lukewarm and unfaithful heart, diſguſted with virtue,

enviouſly regards the pleaſures, and vain happineſs of the world; and his diſguſts being only the conſequence and ſufferings of his weakneſs, and the lukewarmneſs of his faith, to plunge into ſin, begins to appear as the only reſource left him, from wearineſs and the gloomineſs of piety.

The ſecond difference is, That the faithful Chriſtian, in the midſt of his diſguſts and hardſhips, at leaſt bears a conſcience which reproaches him not with guilt: He at leaſt is ſupported, by the teſtimony of his own heart, and by a certain degree of internal peace, which, though neither warm, nor very ſenſible, fails not, however, to eſtabliſh within us, a calm which we never experienced in the paths of error: on the contrary, the lukewarm and unfaithful ſoul, allowing himſelf, againſt the teſtimony of his own conſcience, a thouſand daily tranſgreſſions, of which he knows not the wickedneſs, bears always an uneaſy and ſuſpicious conſcience; and being no longer ſuſtained by love for his duties, nor the peace and teſtimony of his conſcience, this ſtate of agitation and wearineſs ſoon terminates in the miſerable peace of ſin.

The laſt reaſon is, That the diſguſts of the faithful Chriſtian being only trials, to which, for his purification, God expoſes him, he ſupplies, in a thouſand ways, the ſenſible conſolations of virtue which he refuſes him; he replaces them by a more powerful protection; by a merciful attention to remove every danger which might ſeduce him; and by more abundant ſuccours of grace; for the Almighty wiſhes neither to loſe nor diſcourage him; he wiſhes only to prove him; and make him expiate by the afflictions and hardſhips of virtue, the unjuſt pleaſures of ſin: But the diſguſts of an infidel ſoul are not trials, they are puniſhments:

ments: It is not a merciful God who ſuſpends the conſolations of grace, without ſuſpending grace itſelf: It is not a tender father, who ſupplies by the ſolidity of his tenderneſs, and by effectual aſſiſtances, the apparent rigours he is under the neceſſity of uſing: It is a ſevere judge, who only begins to deprive the criminal of a thouſand indulgences, becauſe the ſentence of death is prepared for him. The hardſhips of virtue find a thouſand reſources in virtue itſelf; thoſe of lukewarmneſs, can find them only in the deceitful pleaſures of vice.

Such, my brethren, is the inevitable lot of lukewarmneſs in the ways of God; the miſery of loſing righteouſneſs. Will you tell us, after this, that you wiſh to practiſe only a degree of virtue which may continue; that theſe great exertions of zeal cannot be ſupported; that it is much better not to begin ſo high, and by theſe means to accompliſh the end; and that they never go far, who exhauſt themſelves at the beginning of their journey.

I know that every exceſs, even in piety, comes not from the Spirit of God, which is a ſpirit of wiſdom and diſcretion; that the zeal which overturns the order of our ſtate and duties, is not the piety which comes from above, but an illuſion born in ourſelves; that indiſcretion is a ſource of falſe virtues; and that we often give to vanity what we think is given to truth.

But I tell you from God, that to perſevere in his ways, we muſt give ourſelves up to him without reſerve: That in order to ſupport the fidelity due to the eſſential parts of our duty, we muſt unceaſingly endeavour to weaken the paſſions which oppoſe it; and that keeping terms with theſe paſſions, under the pretext of not going too far, is

to

to dig for ourſelves a grave. I tell you, that it is only the faithful and fervent Chriſtians, who, not contented with ſhunning ſin, ſhun alſo every thing which can lead to it; that it is theſe alone who perſevere, who ſuſtain themſelves, who honour piety by a ſupported, equal and uniform conduct; and, on the contrary, it is lukewarm and relaxed ſouls, who have begun their penitence, by limiting their piety, and accommodating it to the pleaſures and maxims of the world; it is theſe ſouls who draw back, who belie themſelves, and who diſhonour piety, by their inconſtancy and inequality of conduct; by a life, ſometimes blended with virtue and retirement, and at others devoted to the world and weakneſs: And I appeal to yourſelves, my brethren, if, when you ſee in the world a perſon relax from his firſt fervour, gradually mingle himſelf in the pleaſures and ſocieties he had lately ſo ſcrupulouſly and ſeverely denied himſelf; inſenſibly abate his love of retirement, his modeſty, circumſpection, prayers, and exactitude to fulfil his religious duties, you ſay not to yourſelves, that he is not far from returning to what he formerly was? Are not theſe relaxations regarded by you as a prelude to his ruin; and that virtue is nearly extinct, when once you ſee it weakened? Do you even require ſo much to rouſe your cenſures, and malicious preſages againſt piety? Unjuſt that you are, you condemn a cold and unfaithful virtue, while you condemn us for requiring of you a virtue faithful and fervent! You pretend, that in order to continue, you muſt begin with moderation, while you prophecy that a total departure from virtue is not far diſtant, when once it begins to be followed with coolneſs and negligence.

From a relaxation alone, therefore, we are to dread a return to our former courſes, and a departure from virtue: It is not by giving ourſelves up without reſerve to God, that

that we become diſguſted with piety, and are forſaken by him: The way to come glorioufly off in battle, is not by ſparing, but overcoming the enemy: There is no dread, therefore, of doing too much, leſt we ſhould be unable to ſupport it; on the contrary, to merit the grace neceſſary to our ſupport, we ought, from the firſt, to leave nothing undone. What illuſion, my brethren! We dread zeal, as dangerous to perſeverance: and it is zeal alone which can obtain it: We fix ourſelves in a lukewarm and commodious life, as the only one which can ſubſiſt; and it is the only one which proves falſe: We ſhun fidelity, as the rock of piety; and piety without fidelity is never far from ſhipwreck.

It is thus that lukewarmneſs removes from the infidel ſoul the grace of protection; of which the abſence depriving our faith of all its ſtrength, and the yoke of Jeſus Chriſt of all its conſolations, leaves us in a ſtate of ſuch imbecility, that to be loſt, innocence requires only to be attacked. But if the loſs of righteouſneſs is inevitable, on the part of grace which is withdrawn, it is ſtill more ſo, on account of the paſſions which are fortified within us.

PART II. What renders vigilance ſo neceſſary to Chriſtian piety, is, that all the paſſions which oppoſe themſelves in us to the law of God, only die, as I may ſay, with us. We undoubtedly are able to weaken them, by the aſſiſtance of grace, and a fervent and lively faith; but the roots always continue in the heart; we always carry within us the principles of the ſame errors our tears have effaced. Guilt may be extinguiſhed in our hearts; but ſin, as the Apoſtle ſays, that is to ſay, the corrupted inclinations which have formed our guilt, inhabits and lives there ſtill: And that fund of corruption which removed us ſo far from God, is

ſtil

ſtill left us in our penitence, to ſerve as a continual exerciſe to virtue; to render us, by the continual occaſions of combat it raiſes up for us, more worthy of an eternal crown; to humble our pride; to keep us in remembrance that the duration of our preſent life is a time of war and danger; and, by a deſtiny inevitable to our nature, that there is only one ſtep between relaxation and guilt.

It is true, that the grace of Jeſus Chriſt is given us to repreſs theſe corrupted inclinations which ſurvive our converſion; but in a ſtate of lukewarmneſs, as I have already ſaid, grace offering us only common ſuccours, and the grace of protection, of which we are become unworthy, being either more rare, or entirely ſuſpended, it is evident that the paſſions muſt acquire new ſtrength. But I ſay, that not only the paſſions are ſtregthened, in a lukewarm and infidel life, becauſe the grace of protection which checked them is more rare, but likewiſe by the ſtate itſelf of relaxation and coldneſs; for that life being only a continued indulgence of all the paſſions; a ſimple eaſineſs in granting, to a certain degree, every thing which flatters the appetites; a watchfulneſs, even of ſelf-love, to remove whatever might repreſs, or reſtrain them; and a perpetual uſage of all things capable of inflaming them: it is evident, that by theſe means they muſt daily acquire new force.

In a word, my brethren, we are not to imagine, that in puſhing our indulgence for our paſſions, only to certain lengths permitted, we appeaſe them as I may ſay, that we allow ſufficient to ſatisfy them, and not enough to ſtain our ſoul, or carry trouble and remorſe through our conſcience; or fancy that we can ever attain a certain degree of equilibration betwixt virtue and ſin, where, on the one ſide, our paſſions

paſſions are ſatisfied by the indulgence allowed them; and on the other, our conſcience is tranquil, by the abſence of guilt, which we ſhun. For ſuch is the plan adopted by the lukewarm ſoul: Favourable to his indolence, becauſe he equally baniſhes every thing, either in virtue or in ſin, which can diſturb him: To the paſſions, he refuſes whatever might trouble his conſcience; and to virtue, whatever might be diſagreeable to, or mortify his ſelf-love: But this ſtate of equilibrium is a perfect chimera. The paſſions know no limits or bounds in guilt; how, therefore, could they poſſibly be reſtrained to thoſe of the lukewarm ſoul? Even the utmoſt exceſs cannot reſtrain or fix them; how then could ſimple indulgences do it? The more you grant, the more you deprive yourſelf of the power to refuſe them any thing. The true ſecret of appeaſing, is not by favouring them to a certain degree; it is by oppoſing them in every thing; every indulgence only renders them more fierce and unmanageable; it is a little water thrown upon a great fire, which, far from extinguiſhing, increaſes its fury: Every thing which flatters the paſſions, renders them more keen, and diminiſhes the probability of being able to conquer them.

Now, ſuch is the ſtate of a lukewarm and unfaithful ſoul. It allows itſelf every animoſity which extends not to avowed revenge; it juſtifies every pleaſure, in which guilt is not palpable; it delivers itſelf up without reſerve to every worldly deſire and gratification, by which no individual, it ſuppoſes, is injured; every omiſſion, which ſeems to turn on the arbitrary duties, or but ſlightly intereſts the eſſential ones, it makes no ſcruple of; every action of ſelf-love, which leads not directly to guilt, it regards as nothing; all that nicety, with regard to rank and perſonal fame, which is compatible with that moderation even the world requires,

requires, it regards as a merit. Now, what happens in conſequence of this? Liſten and you ſhall know; and I beg you will attend to the following reflections.

In the firſt place: All the inclinations within us, which oppoſe themſelves to order and duty, being continually ſtrengthened, order and duty at laſt find in us inſurmountable difficulties; in ſo much, that to accompliſh them on any eſſential occaſion, or when required by the law of God, is like remounting againſt the ſtream of a rapid flood, where the current drags us down, in ſpite of every effort to the contrary; or like a furious and unmanageable horſe, which it is neceſſary to ſtop ſhort on the brink of a precipice. Thus your inſenſibility and pride, are nouriſhed to ſuch a degree of ſtrength, that you abandon your heart to all their impreſſions: Thus your care and anxiety, have ſo fortified in your heart, the deſire of worldly praiſe, that on any important occaſion, where it would be neceſſary to ſacrifice the vanity of its ſuffrages to duty, and expoſe yourſelf, for the good of your ſoul, to its cenſure and deriſion, you will always prefer the intereſts of vanity to thoſe of truth, and the opinions of men will be much more powerful than the fear of God. Thus thoſe anxieties with regard to fortune and advancement, have rendered ambition ſo completely ſovereign of your heart, that in any delicate conjuncture, where the deſtruction of a rival would be neneſſary towards your own elevation, you will never heſitate, but will ſacrifice your conſcience to your fortune; and be unjuſt towards your brother, leaſt you fail towards yourſelf. Thus, in a word, to avoid a long detail, thoſe ſuſpicious attachments, looſe converſations, ridiculous compliances, and deſires of pleaſing, too much attended to, have filled you with diſpoſitions ſo nearly allied to guilt and debauchery, that you are no longer capable of reſiſtance

ance againſt any of their attacks; the corruption prepared, by the whole train of your paſt actions, will be lighted up in an inſtant: Your weakneſs will overcome your reflection: Your heart will go againſt glory, duty, and yourſelf. We cannot long continue faithful, when we find in ourſelves ſo many diſpoſitions to be otherwiſe.

Thus you will yourſelf be ſurpriſed at your own weakneſs: You will aſk at yourſelf, What are become of all thoſe diſpoſitions of modeſty and virtue, which formerly inſpired you with ſuch horror at ſin? You no longer will know yourſelf: But this ſtate of guilt will gradually appear leſs frightful to you: The heart ſoon juſtifies to itſelf, whatever pleaſes it: Whatever is agreeable to us, does not long alarm us; and to the miſery of a departure from virtue, you will add the miſery of ignorance and ſecurity.

Such is the inevitable lot of a lukewarm and unfaithful life: Paſſions which we have too much indulged; "Young lions," ſays a prophet, which have been nouriſhed without precaution, at length grow up, and devour the careleſs hand, which has even aſſiſted to ſtrengthen and render them formidable:" The paſſions arrived to a certain point, gain a complete aſcendancy: In vain you then try to regain yourſelf: The time is paſt; you have foſtered the profane fire in your heart; it muſt at laſt break out; you have nouriſhed the venom within you; it muſt now ſpread and gain upon you; and the time is paſt for any application to medicine; you ſhould have taken it in time; at the commencement the diſeaſe was not irremediable; you have allowed it to ſtrengthen; you have irritated it by every thing which could inflame, and render it incurable; it muſt now be conqueror, and you the victim of your own indiſcretion and indulgence.

Do you not likewiſe ſay, my brethren, that you have the beſt intentions in the world; that you wiſh you could act much better than you do; and though you have the ſincereſt deſires for ſalvation, yet a thouſand conjunctures happen in life, where we forget all our good intentions, and muſt be ſaints to reſiſt their impreſſions? This is exactly what we tell you; that in ſpite of all your pretended good intentions, if you do not fly, ſtruggle, watch, pray, and continually take the command over yourſelf, a thouſand occaſions will occur, where you will no longer be maſter of your own weakneſs: This is what we tell you, that nothing but a mortified and watchful life can place us beyond the reach of temptation and danger: That it is ridiculous to ſuppoſe we ſhall continue faithful, in thoſe moments when violently attacked, when we bear a heart weakened, wavering, and already on the verge of falling; that none but the houſe built upon a rock can reſiſt the winds and the tempeſts; and, in a word, that we muſt be holy, and firmly eſtabliſhed in virtue, to live free from guilt.

And when I ſay that we muſt be holy: Alas! my brethren, the moſt faithful and fervent Chriſtians, with every inclination mortified as far as the frailty of our nature will permit; imaginations purified by prayer, and minds nouriſhed in virtue, and meditation on the law of God, frequently find themſelves in ſuch terrible ſituations, that their hearts ſink within them; their imaginations become troubled and deranged; they ſee themſelves in thoſe melancholy agitations, where they float for a long time betwixt victory and death; and, like a veſſel ſtruggling againſt the waves, in the midſt of an enraged ocean, they can only look for ſafety from the Almighty Commander of winds and tempeſts. And you, with a heart already half-ſeduced, with inclinations at leaſt bordering upon guilt, would wiſh your

your weakneſs to be proof againſt all attacks, and the moſt powerful temptations to find you always tranquil and inacceſſible? You would wiſh, with your lukewarm, ſenſual, and worldly morals, that on theſe occaſions your ſoul ſhould be gifted with that ſtrength and faith which even the moſt tender and watchful piety ſometimes cannot give? You would wiſh paſſions flattered, nouriſhed, and ſtrengthened, to remain, tractable, quiet, and cold, in the preſence of objects moſt capable of lighting them up? Thoſe which after years of auſterities, and a life devoted to prayer and watching, awake ſometimes in a moment, far even from danger, and, by melancholy examples, make the moſt upright feel, that we never ſhould be off our guard, and that the higheſt point of virtue is ſometimes the inſtant which precedes a departure from, and total loſs of it. Such is our lot, my brethren, to be quick-ſighted only towards the dangers which regard our fortune, or our life, and not even to know thoſe which threaten our ſalvation. But let us undeceive ourſelves: To ſhun guilt, ſomething more is required than the lukewarmneſs and indolence of virtue; and vigilance is the only mean left us by our Saviour to preſerve our innocence. Firſt reflection.

A ſecond reflection to be made on this truth is, That the paſſions, daily ſtrengthening in a lukewarm and infidel life, not only duty finds in us unſurmountable repugnancies, but guilt likewiſe, as I may ſay, poliſhes itſelf; and at laſt we feel no more repugnance to it, than to the ſimpleſt fault Indeed, by theſe daily infidelities inſeparable from lukewarmneſs, the heart, as if by inſenſible ſteps, at laſt arrives at thoſe dangerous limits, which, by a ſingle line, ſeparate life from death, guilt from innocence, and makes the final ſtep, almoſt without perceiving it; only a little way remaining for him to go, and having no occaſion for any new exertion

exertion to accompliſh it, he does not believe he has exceeded his former bounds. He had repleniſhed himſelf with diſpoſitions, ſo nearly bordering on guilt, that he has brought forth iniquity without pain, repugnance, viſible movement, or even perceiving it himſelf: Similar to a dying perſon, whom the languors of a long and painful malady have ſo extenuated, and ſo nearly approached to his end, that the departing ſigh reſembles thoſe which have preceded it; coſts him no greater effort than the others, and even leaves the ſpectators uncertain, whether his laſt moment is come, or if he ſtill breathes: And this is what renders the ſtate of a lukewarm and infidel ſoul ſtill more dangerous, that they are commonly dead to grace, without knowing it themſelves: They become enemies to God, while they ſtill live with him as with a friend: They are ſtill in the commerce of holy things, when they have loſt the grace, which entitles us to approach them.

Thus, let thoſe ſouls whom this diſcourſe regards, no longer deceive themſelves, becauſe they believe to have hitherto avoided a groſs departure from virtue: Their ſtate before God, is undoubtedly only more dangerous: Perhaps the moſt formidable danger of lukewarmneſs, is, that already dead in the ſight of God, they live in their opinion, without any viſible or marked guilt; that they compoſe themſelves tranquilly in death, depending on an appearance of life which comforts them; that to the danger of their ſituation, they add a falſe peace, which confirms them in this path of illuſion and darkneſs; it is in a word, that the Lord, by terrible and ſecret judgments, ſtrikes them with blindneſs, and puniſhes the corruption of their heart, by permitting them to be ignorant of it. A groſs fall from virtue, if I may venture to ſay ſo, would to them be a mark of the goodneſs and mercy of God: They would then at leaſt

open

open their eyes: Naked and manifeſt guilt would then carry trouble and uneaſineſs through their conſcience: The diſeaſe at laſt diſcovered, would perhaps induce them to have recourſe to the remedy; in place of which, this life, apparently regular, compoſes and calms them; renders uſeleſs the example of fervent Chriſtians; perſuades them that this great fervour is unneceſſary; that it is much more the effect of temperament than of grace; that it is an emotion of zeal, rather than a duty; and makes them liſten to, as vain exaggerations, all that we ſay, with regard to a lukewarm and infidel life. Second reflection.

In a word, the laſt reflection to be made on this great truth, is, that ſuch is the nature of our heart, always to remain much below what it at firſt propoſed. A thouſand times we have formed pious reſolutions; we have projected to carry to a certain point, the detail of our duties and conduct; but the execution has always much diminiſhed from the ardour of our projects; and has reſted at a degree much below the one to which we wiſhed to raiſe ourſelves: Thus, the lukewarm Chriſtian, propoſing to himſelf no higher point of virtue, than to ſhun guilt; looking preciſely to precept, that is to ſay, to that rigorous and preciſe point of the law, immediately below which is prevarication and death: He infallibly reſts below, and never reaches that eſſential point, which he had propoſed to himſelf: It is, therefore, an inconteſtible maxim, that we muſt undertake much, to execute little; and look very high, to attain at leaſt the middle. Now, this maxim, ſo ſure with regard even to the moſt juſt, is much more ſo with reſpect to the lukewarm and infidel ſoul: For coldneſs, more ſtrongly binding all his ties, and augmenting the weight of his corruption and miſery, it is principally him, who ought to take this grand flight, in order to attain at leaſt the loweſt degree;

degree; and in his counſels with himſelf, propoſe perfection, if he wiſhes to reſt, even at the obſervance of precept: Above all, it is to him that we may truly ſay, that by ſettling in his mind, only to ſhun guilt, loaded as he is with the weight of his coldneſs and infidelities, he will always alight at a place very diſtant from the one he expected to reach; and the line of guilt being immediately below this commodious and ſenſual virtue, the very ſame efforts he made, as he thought to ſhun it, will only ſerve to conduct him to it. Theſe are reaſons, drawn entirely from the weakneſs the ſtrengthened paſſions leave to the lukewarm and infidel ſoul; and which inevitably lead it to ruin.

The only reaſon, however, you allege to us, for perſevering in this dangerous ſtate, is, that you are weak, and totally unable to ſupport a more retired, limited, mortified, and perfect manner of life: But ſurely, it is becauſe you are weak, that is to ſay, full of diſguſt for virtue, of love for the world, and of ſubjection to your appetites, that a retired and mortified life becomes indiſpenſable: It is becauſe you are weak, that with more caution, you ought to ſhun every danger; take a greater command over yourſelf; pray, watch, refuſe yourſelf every improper gratification, and attain even to holy exceſſes of zeal and fervour, in order to accompliſh a barrier againſt your weakneſs. You are weak? And becauſe you are weak, you think you are entitled to expoſe yourſelf more than another; to dread danger leſs; with more tranquillity and indifference, to neglect the neceſſary remedies; to allow more to your appetites; to preſerve a ſtronger attachment to the world, and every thing which can corrupt the heart? What illuſion! You make your weakneſs then the title of your ſecurity? In the neceſſities you have to watch and pray, you find then the privilege of diſpenſing with them! And ſince, when

when is it, that the ſick are authoriſed to allow themſelves greater exceſſes, and make uſe of leſs precaution, than thoſe who enjoy a perfect health? Privation has always been the way of the weak and infirm; and to allege your weakneſs as a right of diſpenſation from a more fervent and Chriſtian life, is like enumerating your complaints, in order to perſuade us that you have no occaſion for medicine. Second reaſon, drawn from the paſſions, which are ſtrengthened in a ſtate of lukewarmneſs, and which proves, that this ſtate always ends in a departure from virtue, and the loſs of righteouſneſs.

To all theſe reaſons, I ſhould add a third, drawn from the external ſuccours of religion, neceſſary to the ſupport of piety; and which become uſeleſs to the lukewarm and infidel ſoul.

The Holy Sacrament not only becomes of no utility, but even dangerous to him; either by the coldneſs with which he approaches it, or by the vain confidence with which it inſpires him; it is no longer a reſource for him; it has loſt its effect, like medicines too frequently made uſe of; it amuſes his languor, but cannot cure him: It is like the food of the ſtrong and healthy, which ſo far from re-eſtabliſhing, completes the ruin of the weak ſtomach: It is the breath of the Holy Spirit, which, unable to re-illuminate the ſtill ſmoaking ſpark, entirely extinguiſhes it; that is to ſay, that the grace of the Holy Sacrament, received in a lukewarm and infidel heart, no longer operating there an increaſe of life and ſtrength, never fails, ſooner or later, to operate the death and condemnation attached to the abuſe of theſe divine remedies.

Prayer

Prayer, that channel of grace, that nouriſhment to a faithful heart; that ſweetener of piety; that refuge againſt all attacks of the enemy; that cry of an affected ſoul, which renders the Lord ſo attentive to his neceſſities: Prayer, without which the Almighty no longer makes himſelf felt within us; without which we no longer know our father; we no longer render thanks to our benefactor, nor appeaſe our judge; we expoſe no longer our wounds to our phyſician: We live without God in the world: Prayer, in a word, ſo neceſſary to the moſt eſtabliſhed virtue, to the lukewarm ſoul, is no longer but the wearifome occupation of a diſtracted mind; of a heart dry, and ſhared betwixt a thouſand foreign affections. He no longer experiences that love, thoſe conſolations, which are the fruit of a fervent and faithful life; He no longer, as if with a new light, ſees the holy truths, which confirm the ſoul in its contempt for the world, and love for the things of heaven; and which, after its departure hence, make it regard with new diſguſt every thing which fooliſh man admires: He leaves it, no longer filled with that lively faith which reckons as nothing, all the obſtacles and diſguſts of virtue, and with a holy zeal, devours all its ſorrows: He no longer feels after it, more love for his duty, and horror at the world; more determination to fly from its dangers; more light to know its nothingneſs and miſery, and ſtrength to hate and ſtruggle with himſelf; more terror for the judgments of God, and compunction for his own weakneſſes: He leaves it, only more fatigued than before, with virtue; more filled with the phantoms of the world, which in the moment when at the feet of the Almighty, have, it appears, agitated more briſkly his imagination, blaſted and ſtained by all thoſe images; more happy, by being quit of a bur-

a burdenſome duty, where he has experienced nothing ſo agreeable, as the pleaſure of finding it over; more eager, by amuſements and infidelities, to ſupply this moment of wearineſs and pain; in a word, more diſtant from God, whom he has irritated by the infidelity and irreverence of his prayer. Such, my brethren, is the fruit which he reaps from it. In a word, all the external duties of religion, which ſupport and rouſe piety, are no longer to the lukewarm Chriſtian, but dead and inanimate cuſtoms, where his heart is not; where there is more of habit, than of love or ſpirit of piety; and where the only diſpoſition he brings is the wearineſs and languor, of always doing the ſame thing.

Thus, my brethren, the grace of this ſoul, being continually attacked and weakened, either by the practices of the world, which it allows itſelf, or by thoſe of piety, which it abuſes; either by ſenſual objects which nouriſh its corruption, or by thoſe of religion, which increaſe its diſguſts; either by the pleaſures which enervate it, or by the duties which fatigue it; all uniting to make it bend towards ruin, and nothing ſupporting it: Alas! what fate can it promiſe itſelf! Can the lamp without oil, long continue to give light? The tree which no longer draws nouriſhment from the earth, can it fail to wither, and be devoted to the fire? Now, ſuch is the ſituation of the lukewarm Chriſtian; entirely delivered up to himſelf, nothing ſupports him; ſurrounded by wearineſs and diſguſts, nothing reanimates him; full of weakneſs and of languor, nothing protects him; every conſolation of the juſt ſoul, is to him an increaſe of languor; every thing which gives ſupport to a faithful Chriſtian, diſguſts and overpowers him; whatever renders the yoke more eaſy to others, makes his more burdenſome; and the ſuccours of piety are no longer but his fatigues, or his crimes. Now, in this ſtate,

O my God! almoſt abandoned by thy grace, tired of thy yoke, diſguſted with himſelf, as well as with virtue, weakened by diſeaſes and their remedies, ſtaggering at every ſtep, a breath overturns him; he himſelf leans towards his fall, without any additional or foreign impreſſion; and to ſee him fall, there is no neceſſity for his being attacked.

Theſe are the reaſons, which prove the certainty of the loſs of righteouſneſs in a lukewarm and infidel life. But are ſo many proofs neceſſary, my dear hearer, when your own misfortunes have ſo ſadly inſtructed you? Remember from whence you are fallen, as the Holy Spirit of God formerly ſaid to a lukewarm and infidel ſoul: Remount to the ſource of the diſorders under which you ſtill bend: You will find it in the negligence and infidelity of which we ſpeak. A birth of paſſion too feebly rejected, an occaſion of danger too much frequented, practices of piety too frequently omitted or deſpiſed, convenience too ſenſually ſought after, deſires of pleaſing too much liſtened to, dangerous writings too little avoided; the ſource is almoſt imperceptible: The torrent of iniquity proceeding from it, has completely inundated the capacity of your ſoul: It was only a ſpark which has lighted up this great conflagration; it was a morſel of leaven, which, in the end, has fermented, and corrupted the whole maſs. You never believed it poſſible, that you could be, what at preſent you are: Whatever was ſaid to you on this ſubject, you heard as exaggerations of zeal and ſpirituality: You would then have come forward of your own accord, in order to clear yourſelf of certain ſteps, for which you now feel not the ſmalleſt remorſe: Remember from whence you are fallen: Conſider the depth of the abyſs into which you are plunged: It is relaxation and ſlight infidelities, which by degrees have conducted you to it. Once more, remember it; and ſee, if that can be denominated a ſure or durable ſtate, which has brought you to the precipice. Such

Such is the uſual artifice of Satan: He never at firſt propoſes guilt; that would frighten away his prey, and remove it beyond the reach of his ſurpriſes: Too well he knows the road for entering the heart; he knows that he muſt gradually confirm the timid conſcience againſt the horror of guilt, and propoſe nothing at firſt but honeſt purpoſes, and certain limits in pleaſure: It is not boldly like the lion, he at firſt attacks; it is warily like the ſerpent: He does not lead you ſtraight to the gulf; he conducts you there by winding paths. No, my brethren, crimes are never the firſt eſſays of the heart. David was imprudent and ſlothful, before he became an adulterer: Solomon had allowed himſelf to be ſeduced and enervated by the delights and magnificence of royalty, before he publicly appeared in the midſt of lewd women: Judas had given up his heart to money, before he put a price upon his maſter: Peter was preſumptuous before he renounced the truth. Vice has its progreſs, as well as virtue: As the day, ſays the Prophet, inſtructs the day, thus the night gives melancholy leſſons to the night; and there is not far betwixt a ſtate, which ſuſpends all the grace of protection, fortifies all the paſſions, renders uſeleſs all the ſuccours of piety, and a ſtate where it is entirely extinct.

What then, my dear hearer, can confirm or comfort you, in this life of negligence and infidelity? Is it that exemption from guilt you have hitherto preſerved? But I have ſhewn you, that it is either guilt itſelf, or that it will not fail, ſoon to lead you to it: Is it the love of eaſe? But in that, you enjoy neither the pleaſures of the world, nor the conſolations of virtue: Is it the aſſurance that the Almighty requires no more of you? But how can the luke-warm and unfaithful ſoul ſatisfy or pleaſe him, when from his mouth he rejects him? Is it the irregularity in which the generality

generality of men live, and who carry it to an exceſs which you avoid? But their fate is perhaps leſs to be mourned, and leſs deſperate than your own; They at leaſt know their malady, while you regard your own as a ſtate of perfect health. Is it the dread of being unable to ſupport a more mortified, watchful, and Chriſtian life? But ſince you have hitherto been able to ſupport ſome remains of virtue and innocence, without the comforts and conſolations of grace, and in ſpite of the wearineſſes and diſguſts which your lukewarmneſs has ſpread through all your duties, what will it be when the Spirit of God, ſhall ſoften your yoke, and when a more fervent and faithful life, ſhall have reſtored to you all the grace and conſolations, of which your lukewarmneſs has deprived you? Piety is never ſad, or inſupportable, but when it is cold and unfaithful.

Riſe then, ſays a prophet, wicked and ſlothful ſoul: Break the fatal charm, which lulls, and chains the to thine indolence. The Lord whom thou believeſt to ſerve, becauſe thou doſt not openly affront him, is not the God of the wicked, but of the faithful; he is not the rewarder of idleneſs and ſloth, but of tears, watchings, and combats: He eſtabliſheth not in his abodes, and in his everlaſting city, the uſeleſs, but the vigilant and laborious ſervant: And his kingdom, ſays the Apoſtle, is not of fleſh and blood, that is to ſay, of an unworthy effeminacy, and a life devoted to the appetites, but the ſtrength and virtue of God; namely, a continued vigilance; a generous ſacrifice of all our inclinations; a conſtant contempt of all things which paſs away; and a tender and ardent deſire for thoſe inviſible bleſſings which fade not, nor even paſs away: Which may God, in his infinite mercy, grant to all aſſembled here. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON VI.

ON EVIL-SPEAKING.

JOHN ii. 24.

But Jeſus did not commit himſelf unto them; becauſe he knew all men.

THESE were the ſame Phariſees, who a little before had been decrying to the people, the actions of Jeſus Chriſt, and endeavouring to poiſon the purity and ſanctity of his words, who now make a ſhew of believing in him, and claſſing themſelves amongſt his diſciples. And ſuch is the character of the evil-ſpeaker; under the mark of eſteem, and the flattering expreſſions of friendſhip, to conceal the gall and bitterneſs of ſlander.

Now, although this be perhaps the only vice, which no circumſtance can palliate, it is the one we are moſt ingenious in concealing from ourſelves, and to which piety and the world at preſent ſhow the greateſt indulgence. Not, that the character of a ſlanderer is not equally odious to men, as, according to the expreſſion of the Holy Spirit, it is abominable in the ſight of God; but in that number, they compriſe only particular defamers of a blacker and more avowed malignity, who deal their blows indiſcriminately, and without art; and who, with ſufficient malice to cenſure, are deſtitute of the wit neceſſary to pleaſe: Now,

Now, the defamers of that deſcription are more rare; and had we only them to addreſs ourſelves to, it would be ſufficent at preſent to point out, how much unworthy of reaſon and religion this vice is, to inſpire with a juſt deteſtation of it, thoſe who feel themſelves guilty.

But there is another deſcription of ſlanderers, who condemn the vice, yet allow themſelves the practice of it; who, without regard, defame their brethren, yet applaud themſelves for circumſpection and moderation; who carry the ſting to the heart; but, becauſe it is more brilliant and piercing, perceive not the wound it has made. Now, defamers of this character are every where to be found; the world is filled with them; even the holy aſylums are not free; this vice is the bond of union to the aſſemblies of ſinners; it often finds its way even into the ſociety of the juſt; and we may ſafely ſay, that all have erred from the ſtrait road; and there is not one, who has preſerved his tongue pure, and his lips undefiled.

It is proper, then, my brethren, to expoſe at preſent the illuſion of the pretexts, made uſe of every day in the world, in juſtification of this vice; and to attack it in the circumſtances, where you believe it moſt innocent; for were I to deſcribe it to you, in general, with all its meanneſs, cruelty, and irreparability, you would no longer apply it to yourſelves; and far from inſpiring you with horror at it, I ſhould be acceſſary towards your perſuaſion, that you are free from its guilt.

Now, what are the pretexts, which, in your eyes, ſoften, or juſtify the vice of evil-ſpeaking? In the firſt place, It is the lightneſs of the faults you cenſure: We perſuade ourſelves, that as it is not a matter of culpability, there can not

cannot likewiſe be much harm in cenſuring it. 2dly, It is the public notoriety, by which thoſe to whom we ſpeak, being already informed of what is reprehenſible in our brother, no loſs of reputation can be the conſequence of our diſcourſes. Laſtly, Zeal for truth, and the glory of God, which does not permit us to be ſilent on thoſe diſorders which diſhonour him. Now, to theſe three pretexts, let us oppoſe three incontrovertible truths. To the pretext of the lightneſs of the faults; that the more the faults which you cenſure are light, the more is the ſlander unjuſt: Firſt Truth. To the pretext of the public notoriety; that the more the faults of our brethren are known, the more cruel is the ſlander which cenſures them: Second Truth. To the pretext of zeal; that the ſame charity, which, in piety, makes us hate ſinners, makes us likewiſe cover up the multitude of their faults: Laſt Truth.

PART I. The tongue, ſays the Apoſtle James, is a devouring fire, a world of iniquity, an unruly evil, full of deadly poiſon. And behold, what I would have applied to the tongue of the evil-ſpeaker, had I undertaken to give you a juſt and natural idea of all the enormity of this vice: I would have ſaid, that the tongue of the ſlanderer is a devouring fire, which tarniſhes whatever it touches; which exerciſes its fury on the good grain, equally as on the chaff; on the profane, as on the ſacred; which, wherever it paſſes, leaves only deſolation and ruin; digs even into the bowels of the earth, and fixes itſelf on things the moſt hidden; turns into vile aſhes, what, only a moment before, had appeared to us ſo precious and brilliant; acts with more violence and danger than ever, in the time when it was apparently ſmothered up, and almoſt extinct; which blackens, what it cannot conſume; and ſometimes ſparkles and delights, before it deſtroys. I would have told you, that evil-

ſpeaking

ſpeaking is an aſſemblage of iniquity; a ſecret pride, which diſcovers to us the mote in our brother's eye, but hides the beam which is our own; a mean envy, which hurt at the talents or proſperity of others, makes them the ſubject of its cenſures, and ſtudies to dim the ſplendour of whatever outſhines itſelf; a diſguiſed hatred, which ſheds in its ſpeeches, the hidden venom of the heart; an unworthy duplicity, which praiſes to the face, and tears in pieces behind the back; a ſhameful levity, which has no command over itſelf, or words, and often ſacrifices both fortune and comfort, to the imprudence of an amuſing converſation; a deliberate barbarity, which goes to pierce your abſent brother; a ſcandal, where you become a ſubject of ſhame and ſin to thoſe who liſten to you; an injuſtice, where you raviſh from your brother, what is deareſt to him. I would have ſaid that ſlander is a reſtleſs evil; which diſturbs ſociety; ſpreads diſſention through cities and countries; diſunites the ſtricteſt friendſhips; is the ſource of hatred and revenge; fills, wherever it enters, with diſturbances and confuſion; and, every where, is an enemy to peace, comfort, and Chriſtian good breeding. Laſtly, I would have added, that it is an evil full of deadly poiſon; whatever flows from it is infected, and poiſons whatever it approaches; that even its praiſes are impoiſened; its applauſes, malicious; its ſilence, criminal; its geſtures, motions and looks, have all their venom, and ſpread it each in their way.

Behold, what in this diſcourſe, it would have been my duty, more at large, to have expoſed to your view, had I not propoſed only to paint to you, the vileneſs of the vice, which I am now going to combat; but as I have already ſaid, theſe are only general invectives, which none apply to themſelves. The more odious the vice is repreſented, the

the leſs do you perceive yourſelves concerned in it; and though you acknowledge the principle, you make no uſe of it, in the regulation of your manners; becauſe, in theſe general paintings, we always find features which reſemble us not. I wiſh, therefore, to confine myſelf at preſent, to the ſingle object of making you feel all the injuſtice of that deſcription of ſlander, which you think the moſt innocent; and leaſt you ſhould not feel yourſelves connected with what I ſhall ſay, I ſhall attack it, only in the pretexts which you continually employ in its juſtification.

Now the firſt pretext, which authoriſes in the world almoſt all the defamations, and is the cauſe that our converſations are now continual cenſures upon our brethren, is the pretended inſignificancy of the vices we expoſe to view. We would wiſh not to tarniſh a man of character, or ruin his fortune, by diſhonouring him in the world; to ſtain the principles of a woman's conduct, by entering into the eſſential points of it; that would be too infamous and mean: But upon a thouſand faults, which lead our judgment to believe them capable of all the reſt; to inſpire the minds of thoſe who liſten to us with a thouſand ſuſpicions, which point out what we dare not ſay; to make ſatirical remarks, which diſcover a myſtery, where no perſon before had perceived the leaſt intention of concealment; by poiſonous interpretations, to give an air of ridicule to manners which had hitherto eſcaped obſervation; to let every thing, on certain points, be clearly underſtood, while proteſting, that they are incapable themſelves of cunning or deceit, is what the world makes little ſcruple of; and though the motives, the circumſtances, and the effects of theſe diſcourſes, be highly criminal, yet gaiety and livelineſs excuſe

their malignity, to thoſe who liſten to us, and even conceal from ourſelves their atrocity.

I ſay, in the firſt place, the motives. I know that it is above all by the innocency of the intention, that they pretend to juſtify themſelves; that you continually ſay, that your deſign is not to tarniſh the reputation of your brother, but innocently to divert yourſelves with faults which do not diſhonour him in the eyes of the world. You, my dear hearer, to divert yourſelf with his faults! But what is that cruel pleaſure, which carries ſorrow and bitterneſs to the heart of your brother? Where is the innocency of an amuſement, whoſe ſource ſprings from vices, which ought to inſpire you with compaſſion and grief? If Jeſus Chriſt forbid us in the goſpel, to invigorate the languors of converſation by idle words, ſhall it be more permitted to you, to enliven it by deriſions and cenſures? If the law curſe him, who uncovers the nakedneſs of his relations, ſhall you, who add raillery and inſult to the diſcovery, be more protected from that malediction? If whoever call his brother fool, be worthy, according to Jeſus Chriſt, of eternal fire; ſhall he who renders him the contempt and laughing-ſtock of a profane aſſembly, eſcape the ſame puniſhment? You, to amuſe yourſelf with his faults? But does charity delight in evil? Is that rejoicing in the Lord, as commanded by the Apoſtle? If you love your brother as yourſelf, can you delight in what afflicts him? Ah! The church formerly held in horror the exhibitions of gladiators, and denied that believers, brought up in the tenderneſs and benignity of Jeſus Chriſt, could innocently feaſt their eyes with the blood and death of theſe unfortunate ſlaves, or form an harmleſs recreation of ſo inhuman a pleaſure. But you renew more deteſtable ſhows, to enliven your languor: You bring upon the ſtage, not infamous wretches devoted

devoted to death, but members of Jeſus Chriſt, your brethren; and there you entertain the ſpectators, with wounds, which you inflict on perſons rendered ſacred by baptiſm.

Is it then neceſſary that your brother ſhould ſuffer, to amuſe you? Can you find no delight in your converſations, unleſs his blood, as I may ſay, is furniſhed towards your iniquitous pleaſures? Edify each other, ſays St. Paul, by words, of peace and charity; relate the wonders of God towards the juſt, the hiſtory of his mercies to ſinners; recal the virtue of thoſe, who with the ſigns of faith have preceded us; make an agreeable relaxation to yourſelves, in reciting the pious examples of your brethren with whom you live; with a religious joy, ſpeak of the victories of faith; of the agrandiſement of the kingdom of Jeſus Chriſt; of the eſtabliſhment of truth, and the extinction of error; of the favours which Jeſus Chriſt beſtows on his church, by raiſing up in it faithful paſtors, enlightened members, and religious princes; animate yourſelves to virtue, by contemplating the little ſolidity of the world, the emptineſs of pleaſures, and the unhappineſs of ſinners, who yield themſelves up to their unruly paſſions. Are theſe grand objects not worthy the delight of Chriſtians? It was thus, however, that the firſt believers rejoiced in the Lord, and from the ſweets of their converſations, formed one of the moſt holy conſolations to their temporal calamities. It is the heart my brethren, which decides upon our pleaſures: A corrupted heart feels no delight, but in what recals to him the image of his vices: Innocent delights, are only ſuitable to virtue.

In effect, you excuſe the malignity of your cenſures, by the innocency of your intentions. But fathom the ſecret of your heart: Whence comes it, that your ſarcaſms are always

always pointed to ſuch an individual, and that you never amuſe yourſelf with more wit, or more agreeably, than in recalling his faults? May it not proceed from a ſecret jealouſy? Do not his talents, fortune, credit, ſtation, or character, hurt you more than his faults? Would you find him ſo fit a ſubject for cenſure, had he fewer of thoſe qualities which exalt him above you? Would you experience ſuch pleaſure in expoſing his foibles, did not the world find qualities in him both valuable and praiſe-worthy? Would Saul have ſo often repeated with ſuch pleaſure, that David was only the ſon of Jeſſe, had he not conſidered him as a rival more deſerving than himſelf of the empire? Whence comes it, that the faults of all others find you more indulgent? That elſewhere you excuſe every thing, but here every circumſtance comes empoiſened from your mouth? Go to the ſource, and examine, if it is not ſome ſecret root of bitterneſs in your heart? And can you pretend to juſtify, by the innocency of the intention, diſcourſes which flow from ſo corrupted a principle? You maintain that it is neither from hatred nor jealouſy againſt your brother: I wiſh to believe it; but in your ſarcaſms may there not be motives, perhaps ſtill more ſhameful and mean? Is it not your wiſh, to render yourſelf agreeable, by turning your brother into an object of contempt and ridicule? Do you not ſacrifice his character to your fortune? Courts are always ſo filled with theſe adulatory, and ſordidly intereſted ſatires, on each other! The great are to be pitied, whenever they yield themſelves up to unwarrantable averſions. Vices are ſoon found out, even in that virtue itſelf which diſpleaſes them.

But after all, you do not feel yourſelves guilty, you ſay, of all theſe vile motives; and that it is merely through indiſcretion, and levity of ſpeech, if it ſometimes happen that

that you defame your brethren. But is it by that you can ſuppoſe yourſelves more innocent? Levity and indiſcretion; that vice, ſo unworthy of the gravity of a Chriſtian, ſo diſtant from the ſerioufneſs and ſolidity of faith, and ſo often condemned in the goſpel, can it juſtify another vice? What matters it to the brother whom you ſtab, whether it be done through indiſcretion or malice? Does an arrow, unwittingly drawn, make a leſs dangerous, or ſlighter wound, than if ſent on purpoſe? Is the deadly blow, which you give to your brother, more ſlight, becauſe it was lanced through imprudence and levity? And what ſignifies the innocency of the intention, when the action is a crime? But beſides, Is there no criminality in indiſcretion, with regard to the reputation of your brethren? In any caſe whatever, can more circumſpection and prudence be required? Are not all the duties of Chriſtianity compriſed in that of charity? Does not all religion, as I may, conſiſt in that: And to be incapable of attention and care, in a point ſo highly eſſential, is it not conſidering as it were, all the reſt as a ſport? Ah! it is here he ought to put a guard of circumſpection on his tongue, weigh every word, put them together, in his heart, ſays the ſage Eccleſiaſticus, and let them ripen in his mouth. Do any of theſe inconſiderate ſpeeches ever eſcape you, againſt yourſelf? Do you ever fail in attention to what intereſts your honour or glory? What indefatigable cares! What exertions and induſtry, to make them proſper! To what lengths we ſee you go, to increaſe your intereſt or improve your fortune! If it ever happen, that you take blame to yourſelf, it is always under circumſtances which tend to your praiſe: You cenſure in yourſelf, only faults which do you honour; and in confeſſing your vices, you wiſh only to recapitulate your virtues: Self-love connects every thing with yourſelf. Love your brother as you love yourſelf, and every thing will recal to

you

you him; you will be incapable of indiſcretion, where his intereſt is concerned, and will no longer need our inſtructions, in reſpect to what you owe to his character and glory.

But if theſe ſlanders which you call trivial, be criminal in their motives, they are not leſs ſo in their circumſtances.

In the firſt place, I ſhould make you obſerve, that the world, familiarized with guilt, and accuſtomed to ſee the moſt heinous vices, now become the vices of the multitude, is no longer ſhocked at them; denominates light, defamations which turn upon the moſt criminal and ſhameful weakneſſes: Suſpicions of infidelity, in the ſacred bond of marriage, are no longer a marked diſcredit, or an eſſential ſtain; they are ſources of deriſion and pleaſantry: To accuſe a courtier of inſincerity and double-dealing, is no attack upon his honour, it is only caſting a ridicule on the proteſtations of ſincerity, with which he amuſes us: To ſpread the ſuſpicion of hypocriſy, in the ſincereſt piety, is not an inſult to God through his ſaints, it is a language of deriſion, which cuſtom has rendered common: In a word, excepting thoſe crimes puniſhable by the public authority, and which are attended with the loſs of credit and property, all others ſeem trivial and become the ordinary ſubject of converſation, and of the public cenſure.

But let us not purſue this reflection farther. I wiſh to allow that your brother's faults are light: The more they are light, the more are you unjuſt in heightening them: The more he merits indulgence on your part, the more are we to preſume in you, a malignity of obſervation, from which nothing can eſcape; a natural hardneſs of heart, which can excuſe nothing. Were the faults of your brother

ther important, you would ſpare him, you ſay; you would find him entitled to your indulgence: Politeneſs and religion would make your ſilence a duty: What! becauſe his weakneſſes are only trivial, you find him leſs worthy of your regard? The very circumſtance which ought to make him reſpectable, authoriſes you in making him the butt of your ſarcaſms? Are you not, ſays the Apoſtle, become a judge of iniquitous thoughts? And your eye, is it then wicked, only becauſe your brother is good? Beſides, the faults which you cenſure are light; but would they appear ſo to you, were you to be reproached with them? When certain diſcourſes, held in your abſence, have reached your ears, and which, in fact, attacked eſſentially, neither your honour nor probity, but only acquainted the public with ſome of your weakneſſes, what have been your ſenſations? My God! Then it was, that you magnified every thing; that every circumſtance appeared important to you; that, not ſatisfied with exaggerating the malice of the words, you raked up the ſecret of the intention, and hoped to find motives ſtill more odious than the diſcourſes. In vain are you told, that theſe are not reproaches, which eſſentially intereſt you, and at the worſt cannot diſgrace you You think yourſelves inſulted; you mention them with bitter complaints; you blaze out, and are no longer maſters of your reſentment; and whilſt all the world blames the exceſs of your ſenſibility, you alone obſtinately perſiſt in the belief of its being a ſerious affair, and that your honour is intereſted in it. Make uſe then, of this rule in the faults which you publiſh of your brother: Apply the offence to yourſelves; every thing is light, which is againſt him; but with regard to what touches you, the ſmalleſt circumſtance appears important to your pride, and worthy of all your reſentment.

Laſtly,

Laſtly, The vices which you cenſure are light; but do you add nothing of your own to them? Do you faithfully exhibit them as they are? In their relation, do you never mingle the malignity of your own conjectures? Do you not place them in a point of view, different from their natural ſtate? Do you not embelliſh your tale? And in order to make the hero of your ridicule agreeable, do you not faſhion him to the wiſh of the company, and not ſuch as in reality he is? Do you never accompany your ſpeeches with certain geſtures, which allow all to be underſtood; with certain expreſſions, which open the minds of your hearers to a thouſand ſuſpicions, equally raſh, as diſhonourable? Even with a certain ſilence, which permits more to be imagined, than any thing you could have poſſibly ſaid? For, how difficult it is to confine ourſelves to the bounds of truth, when we are no longer within thoſe of charity! The more what we cenſure is light, the more is calumny to be dreaded: we muſt embelliſh to attract attention; and we become calumniators, where we did not ſuppoſe ourſelves even cenſurers.

Behold the circumſtances which regard you; but if, on their account, the ſlanders which you think light, be highly criminal, will they be leſs ſo with reſpect to the individuals whom they attack?

In the *firſt* place, it is a perſon, perhaps of a ſex, to whom, eſpecially on certain points, the ſlighteſt ſtains are important: to whom it is a diſhonour to be publicly ſpoken of; to whom raillery becomes an inſult, and every ſuſpicion an accuſation; in a word, a perſon, whom not to praiſe becomes an outrage, and a diſgrace to their ſtation: Thus St. Paul would have every woman to be adorned with

with baſhfulneſs and modeſty; that is to ſay, he would wiſh thoſe virtues to be as conſpicuous in them, as the ornaments with which they are covered; and the higheſt eulogy which the Holy Spirit makes on Judith, after ſpeaking of her beauty, youth, and great wealth, is, that in all Iſrael, not a perſon was to be found who had aſperſed her conduct; and that her reputation correſponded with her virtue.

2*dly*, Your cenſures are perhaps pointed towards your ſuperiors; or againſt thoſe whom providence has eſtabliſhed above you, and to whom the law of God commands you to render that reſpect and ſubmiſſion to which they are entitled. For the pride which hates inferiority, always recompenſes itſelf, by finding out weakneſſes and foibles, in thoſe to whom it is under the neceſſity of yielding obedience; the more they are exalted, the more they are expoſed to our cenſures: Malignity is even more quick ſighted in regard to their errors; nothing, in their actions, is pardoned; the very perſons moſt loaded with their kindneſſes, or moſt honoured by their familiarity, are frequently thoſe, who moſt openly publiſh their imperfections and vices; and beſides violating the ſacred duty of reſpect, they likewiſe render themſelves guilty of the mean and ſhameful crime of ingratitude.

3*dly*, It is a perſon, perhaps conſecrated to God, and eſtabliſhed in the church, whom you cenſure; who, engaged by the ſanctity of his vocation, to more exemplary, pure, and irreproachable manners, finds himſelf ſtained and diſhonoured by cenſures, which would not affect the reputation of perſons of the world. Thus the Lord, in the ſcriptures, curſeth thoſe who ſhall even meddle with his anointed. Nevertheleſs, the traits of ſlander are never

more animated, more brilliant, or more applauded in the world, than when directed againſt the miniſters of his holy altar; the world, ſo indulgent to itſelf, ſeems to have preſerved its ſeverity only on their account; and for them, it has eyes more cenſorious, and a tongue more empoiſoned, than for the reſt of men. It is true, O my God, that our converſation amongſt the people is not always holy, and free from reproach; that we frequently adopt the manners, luxury, indolence, idleneſs, and pleaſures of the world, againſt which we ought to ſtruggle; that we hold out to believers, more examples of pride and negligence, than of virtue; that we are more jealous of pre-eminence, than of the duties of our calling; and that it is difficult for the world to honour a character, which we ourſelves diſgrace. But as I have often ſaid, my brethren, our infidelities ought rather to be the ſubject of your tears, than of your pleaſantry and cenſures: God generally puniſhes the diſorders of the people, by the corruption of the prieſts; and the moſt dreadful ſcourge with which he ſtrikes kingdoms and empires, is that of not raiſing up in them venerable paſtors, and zealous miniſters, who may ſtem the torrent of diſſipation; it is that of permitting faith and religion to become weakened, even amongſt thoſe who are its defenders and depoſitaries; that the light, which was meant to inſtruct you, ſhould be changed into darkneſs; that the co-operators in your ſalvation, ſhould aſſiſt, by their example, towards your deſtruction; that even from the ſanctuary, from whence ought to proceed only the good favour of Jeſus Chriſt, there ſhould iſſue a ſmell of death and ſcandal; and in a word, that abominations ſhould find their way even into the holy place. But what alteration does the relaxation of our manners, make in the ſanctity of the vocation which conſecrates us? Are the ſacred vaſes, which ſerve on the altar, though compoſed of a mean metal, leſs worthy of

your

your reſpect? And even granting the miniſter may merit your contempt, would you be leſs ſacriligious, in not reſpecting his miniſtry?

What ſhall I ſay? Your detractions and cenſures, are perhaps directed againſt perſons, who make a public profeſſion of piety, and whoſe virtue your hearers formerly reſpected. You then perſuade them, that they had been too credulous; you authoriſe them to believe, that few worthy and intrinſically good characters, are to be found on the earth; that all thoſe held out as ſuch, when narrowly examined, are like the reſt of men: You confirm the prejudices of the world againſt virtue, and give freſh credit to thoſe diſcourſes, ſo uſual, and ſo injurious to religion, with regard to the piety of the ſervants of Jeſus Chriſt. Now, do all theſe appear ſo very light to you? Ah, my brethen! The juſt on this earth are like the holy ark, in the midſt of which the Lord dwells, and any contempt or inſult to which, he moſt rigorouſly avenges: They may ſtagger in their road, like the ark of Iſrael, while conducting in triumph to Jeruſalem; for the pureſt and moſt ſhining virtue, has its ſpots and eclipſes; and even the moſt ſolid, cannot always equally ſupport itſelf; but the Lord is incenſed, when raſh and impure hands, like thoſe of Uzzah, ſhall venture to put them right; and ſcarcely have they touched them, when they are ſmote by his wrath: He takes to himſelf the ſlighteſt inſults with which they diſhonour his ſervants, and he cannot endure that virtue, which has found admirers, even amongſt tyrants, and the moſt barbarous nations, ſhould frequently among believers, find only cenſures and deriſions. Thus the little children of Iſrael, were devoured on the ſpot, for having mocked the ſmall number of hairs of the man of God; nevertheleſs theſe were only the puerile indiſcretions,

tions, ſo pardonable at their age. Fire from heaven, fell upon the officer of the impious Ahaziah, and in a moment conſumed him, for having in deriſion called Elijah the Man of God; nevertheleſs it was a courtier, from whom little regard might be expected, for the auſterity and ſimplicity of a prophet, or for the virtue of a man, ruſtic in his appearance, and hateful to his maſter. Michal was ſtruck with barrenneſs, for having too harſhly cenſured the holy exceſſes of joy and piety of David before the altar; nevertheleſs, it proceeded merely from female delicacy. But to meddle with thoſe who ſerve the Lord, is, according to the Scripture, to meddle with the apple of your eye: He inviſibly curſes thoſe raſh cenſurers on piety: and though he may not ſtrike them as formerly, with inſtant death, yet he marks on their forehead, from this life forward, the ſtamp of reprobation, and denies to themſelves, that precious gift of ſanctity and grace, which they had deſpiſed in others; nevertheleſs, it is the upright who are now become the general butt of the malignity of public diſcourſes; and we may ſafely ſay, that virtue gives birth to more cenſures in the world, than vice.

I do not add, that if theſe ſlanders, which you term light, be highly criminal in their motives and circumſtances, they are ſtill more ſo in their conſequences: I ſay their conſequences, my brethren, which are always irreparable. You may expiate the crime of voluptuouſneſs, by mortification and penitence; the crime of hatred, by love for your enemy; the crime of ambition, by a renunciation of the honours and grandeurs of the age; the crime of injuſtice, by a reſtoration of what you had unjuſtly raviſhed from your brother; even the crime of impiety and freethinking, by a religious and public reſpect for the worſhip of your fathers; but what remedy, what virtue, can repair the crime of detraction?

traction? You revealed to only one perſon the vices of your brother: It may be ſo; but that unlucky confident will ſoon, in his turn, have communicated it to others, who, on their part, no longer regarding as a ſecret, what they have juſt heard, will relate it to the firſt comers; in the relation of it, every one will add new circumſtances; each, in his way, will empoiſon it with ſome new trait; in proportion as they publiſh, they will increaſe, they will magnify it: Similar to a ſpark of fire, ſays St. James, which wafted by an impetuous wind, to different places, ſets in flames, the foreſts and countries it reaches: Such is the deſtiny of detraction.

What you had mentioned in ſecret, was nothing at firſt, and ſeemed ſtifled and buried under its own aſhes; but this fire, lies hid for a while, only in order to burſt forth with redoubled fury; that nothing ſoon acquires reality by paſſing through a diverſity of mouths; every one will add to it, whatever his paſſion, intereſt, diſpoſition of mind, and his own malignity, may hold out to him as probable: The ſource is hardly perceptible; but, aſſiſted in its courſe, by a thouſand foreign ſtreams, the united torrent will overwhelm the court, city, and country; and that, which at its birth, was only a private and imprudent pleaſantry, but a ſimple idea, but a malicious conjecture, will become a ſerious affair, a public and formal diſhonour, the ſubject of every converſation, and an eternal ſtain upon the character of your brother. Repair, now, if you can, the injuſtice and ſcandal; reſtore to your brother the good name, of which you have deprived him. Will you pretend to oppoſe the public inveteracy, and ſingly hold forth his praiſe? But they will regard you as a new comer, who is ignorant of what has taken place in the world; and your praiſes come far too late, will ſerve only to draw upon him freſh ſatires.

Now

Now, what a multitude of crimes, proceeding from only one! The ſins of a whole people become your's: You defame through the mouths of all your fellow-citizens: You are likewiſe anſwerable for the guilt of all who liſten to you. What penitence can expiate evils, to which it can no longer afford relief? And will your tears be able to blot out, what ſhall never be effaced from the memory of man? Again, were the ſcandal to end with you, your death, by terminating it, might be its expiation before God. But it is a ſcandal which will ſurvive you; the ſhameful hiſtories of courts never die with their heroes. Laſcivious writers have tranſmitted to us, the anecdotes, and irregularities of the courts which have preceded us; and licentious authors will be found amongſt us, to acquaint the ages to come, with the public rumours, the ſcandalous circumſtances, and the vices of our own.

O my God! Theſe are of that deſcription of ſins, of which we know not either the enormity or extent: but we know, that to become a ſtumbling block to our brethren, is to overturn for them the work of thy Son's miſſion, and to deſtroy the fruit of his labours, of his death, and of all his miniſtry. Such is the illuſion of the pretext, which you draw from the lightneſs of your ſlanders; the motives are never innocent; the circumſtances always criminal; the conſequences, irreparable. Let us examine, if the pretext of the public notoriety be better founded. This is what yet remains for me to inveſtigate.

PART II. Whence comes it, that the majority of precepts are violated by thoſe very perſons who profeſs themſelves their obſervers; and that we find more difficulty in bringing the world to acknowledge than to correct its tranſgreſſions? The reaſon is, that our ideas of duty are never taken

taken from the groundwork of religion; that we never enter into the ſpirit, to decide upon the letter; and that few people aſcend to the principle, to clear up the doubts, which corruption forms on the detail of the conſequences.

Now, to apply this maxim to my ſubject: What are the rules in the goſpel, which conſtitute ſlander a crime to the diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt? In the firſt place, it is the precept of Chriſtian humility, which, as it ought to eſtabliſh in us, a profound contempt of ourſelves, and to open our eyes on the endleſs multitude of our own wants, ſhould, at the ſame time, ſhut our eyes on thoſe of our brethren. In the ſecond place, it is the duty of charity; that charity, ſo recommended in the goſpel; the grand precept of the law; which covers the faults it cannot correct; excuſes thoſe it cannot cover; delights not in evil; and, with difficulty, believes, becauſe it never wiſhes it to happen. Laſtly, It is the inviolable rule of juſtice, which, never permitting us to do to others, what we would not have done to ourſelves, condemns whatever goes beyond theſe equitable bounds. Now the ſcandalous diſcourſes, which turn upon thoſe faults you term public, eſſentially wound theſe three rules: Judge, then, of their innocency.

1ſt, They wound the precept of Chriſtian humility. Indeed, my dear hearer, were you feelingly touched with your own wants, ſays a holy father; were your own ſin inceſſantly before your eyes, like the penitent David, you would find neither ſufficient leiſure nor attention, to remark the faults of your brethren. The more they were public, the more would you in ſecret thank the Lord, for averting from you that ſcandal; the more would you feel your gratitude awakened, when you conſidered, that though fallen perhaps into the ſame errors, he hath not permitted them

them to be proclaimed from the houſetops, like thoſe of your brother; that he hath left in obſcurity your deeds of darkneſs; that he hath covered them, as I may ſay, with his wings; and that, in the eyes of men, he hath preſerved for you, an honour, and an innocence, which you have ſo often forfeited before him: You would tremble, while ſaying to yourſelf, that perhaps he hath ſpared your confuſion in this world, only to render it more bitter and more durable in the next.

Such is the diſpoſition of Chriſtian humility towards the public diſgraces of our brethren: We ſhould often ſpeak of them to ourſelves, but almoſt never to others. Thus, when the Scribes and Phariſees, preſented to our Saviour, the woman caught in adultery, and eagerly preſſed him to give his judgment; though the guilt of the ſinner was public, Jeſus Chriſt kept a profound ſilence; and to their inſidious and preſſing entreaties, to explain himſelf, he ſimply anſwered: "He that is without ſin "amongſt you, let him firſt caſt a ſtone at her;" as if he thereby meant to make them underſtand, that ſinners, like them, were little entitled to condemn, with ſo high a hand, the crime of that woman; and that to acquire the right of caſting a ſingle ſtone at her, it was neceſſary the individual ſhould himſelf be free from reproach. And behold, my brethren, what I wiſh to ſay to you at preſent: The evil conduct of ſuch a perſon is become notorious: Very well! Whoever of you is without ſin, let him caſt the firſt ſtone: If, before God, you have nothing, perhaps more criminal, with which to reproach yourſelf, ſpeak with freedom; condemn, in the ſevereſt manner, his fault, and open upon him the whole flood of your deriſions and cenſures; it is permitted to you. Ah! you, who ſo hardily ſpeak of it, you are more fortunate; but are you more innocent than he?

he? You are thought to poſſeſs more virtue, and more regard for your duty; but God, who knoweth you, will he judge like men? Were the darkneſs, which conceals your ſhame, to be diſſipated; would not every ſtone you throw, recoil upon yourſelves? Were an unexpected circumſtance to betray your ſecret, would not the audacity and malicious joy with which you cenſure, add additional ridicule to your confuſion and diſgrace? Ah! It is only to artifices and arrangements, which the juſtice of God may diſconcert and lay open in an inſtant, that you are indebted for this fantom of reputation, on which you pride yourſelves ſo much: You perhaps border on the moment, which ſhall reveal your ſhame; and far from bluſhing in ſecret and in ſilence, when faults, like your own, are made known, you ſpeak of, and relate them with pleaſure; and you furniſh the public with traits, which, one day, it will employ againſt yourſelf: It is the threat and prediction of our Saviour. All they that take the ſword, ſhall periſh with the ſword: You pierce your brother with the ſword of the tongue; with the ſame weapon, ſhall you be pierced in your turn; and though you were even exempted from the vices you ſo boldly cenſure in others, the juſt God will deliver you up to it.

Diſgrace is the common puniſhment of pride. Peter, on the evening of the Lord's Supper, never ceaſed to exaggerate the guilt of the diſciple, by whom his maſter was to be betrayed: He was the moſt anxious of them all to know his name, and the moſt forward to expreſs his deteſtation of his perfidy; and immediately after, he falls himſelf into the infidelity which he had ſo lately blamed with ſuch pride and confidence. Nothing draws down upon us the wrath and curſe of God, ſo much as the malicious pleaſure with which we magnify the faults of our brethren;

and his mercy is incenſed, that theſe afflicting examples, which he permits, for the ſole purpoſe of recalling us to our own weakneſſes, and awakening our vigilance, ſhould flatter our pride, and excite only our deriſions and cenſures.

You depart, then, from the rules of Chriſtian humility, when you permit yourſelves to cenſure the faults, however public, of your brother; but you likewiſe eſſentially wound thoſe of charity: For charity never faileth, ſays the Apoſtle. Now, if the vices of your brother be known to thoſe who liſten to you, to what purpoſe, then, do you repeat them afreſh? What indeed can be your intention? To blame his conduct? But, is his ſhame not already ſufficient? Would you wiſh to overwhelm an unfortunate wretch, and give the laſt ſtab to a man, already pierced with a thouſand mortal blows? His guilt has already been exaggerated by ſo many dark and malicious hearts, who have ſpread in colours ſufficient to blacken it for ever: Is he not ſufficiently puniſhed? He is now worthy of your pity, rather than of your cenſures. What then could be your intention? To condole with him for his misfortune? But to open afreſh his wounds, is a ſtrange way of condoling with an unfortunate brother. Is true compaſſion thus cruel? What is it then? To juſtify your prophecies, and former ſuſpicions, on his conduct? To tell us, that you had always believed, that ſooner or later it would come to that? But you come then, to triumph over his misfortune? To applaud yourſelf for his diſgrace? To claim an honour to yourſelf for the malignity of your judgment? Alas! What glory can it be to a Chriſtian, to have ſuſpected his brother; to have believed him guilty, before he was known as ſuch; to have raſhly foreſeen his diſgraces yet to come; we, who ought not to ſee them, even when they have taken place? Ah! You can propheey

ſo

ſo juſtly, on the deſtiny of others: Be a prophet in your own country, and anticipate the misfortunes which threaten you: Why do you not prophecy thus for yourſelf, that unleſs you fly from ſuch an opportunity, and ſuch a danger, you will periſh in it? That unleſs you diſſolve ſuch a connection, the public, which already murmurs, will at laſt break out, and then you ſhall find it too late to repair the ſcandal? That unleſs you quit theſe exceſſes, into which the paſſions of youth, and a bad education, have thrown you, your affairs and fortune will be ruined beyond reſource? It is on theſe points that you ought to exerciſe your art of conjecture. What madneſs, while ſurrounded one's-ſelf with precipices, to be occupied, in contemplating from afar thoſe that threaten our brethren!

Beſides, the more your brother's diſgraces are public, the more affected ought you to be with the ſcandal, which they neceſſarily occaſion to the Church; with the advantage which the wicked and the free-thinkers will draw from them, to blaſpheme the name of the Lord, to harden themſelves in impiety, and to perſuade themſelves, that theſe are weakneſſes common to all men, and that they are moſt virtuous, who beſt know how to conceal them: The more ought you to be afflicted, at the occaſion which theſe public examples of irregularity give to weak ſouls, to fall into the ſame diſorders: the more does charity oblige you to grieve over them; the more ought you to wiſh, that the remembrance of theſe faults ſhould periſh: that the day, and the places of their revealment, ſhould be effaced from the memory of men: and laſtly, the more ought you, by your ſilence, to endeavour to ſuppreſs them. But the whole world ſpeaks of them, you ſay; your ſilence will not prevent the public converſations; conſequently, you may make remarks in your turn. The inference is barbarous:

Becauſe

Becauſe you are unable to repair the diſgrace, are you permitted to augment it? Becauſe you cannot ſave your brother from ſhame, ſhall you aſſiſt to overwhelm him with confuſion and infamy? Becauſe, almoſt every one caſts a ſtone at him, ſhall it be leſs cruel in you, to throw one in your turn, and to unite with thoſe who bruiſe, and beat him in pieces? Setting religion aſide, how beautiful it is, to declare for the unfortunate? How much real dignity and greatneſs of ſoul, in ſheltering under our protection, thoſe abandoned by the world! And even admitting the rules of charity were not to make it a duty to us, the feelings alone, of glory and humanity, ſhould in this caſe be ſufficient.

3*dly*, You not only violate the holy rules of charity; but you are alſo a breaker of thoſe of juſtice. For, the faults of your brother are public; let it be ſo; but place yourſelf in the ſame ſituation, would you exact from him leſs deference or leſs humanity, were your diſgrace to be no longer a myſtery? Would you agree, that the public example gave to your brother a right againſt you, which you arrogate to yourſelf againſt him? Would you accept, on his part, in juſtification of his malignity, an excuſe, which would render him ſtill more odious, mean, and cruel? Beſides, how do you know whether the author of all theſe reports be not an impoſtor? So many falſe reports are circulated in the world; and the malice of men renders them ſo credulous on the faults of others! How do you know, but theſe calumnies have been circulated by an enemy, a rival, or ſome envious perſon, in order to ruin him, who has thwarted his paſſions or his fortune? Are ſuch inſtances rare? Whether it be not ſome heedleſs perſon who has given occaſion to all thoſe diſcourſes, by an indiſcreet expreſſion, uttered without thought, and laid hold of through malice? Are ſuch miſtakes impoſſible? Whether it be not

a mere

a mere conjecture, originally circulated as ſuch, and afterwards given as a truth? Are ſuch alterations uncommon, in public rumours? What could have a greater appearance of feaſibility, to the children of the captivity, than the alledged miſconduct of Suſanna. The judges of the people of God, venerable through their age and dignity, depoſed againſt her; the people exclaimed againſt her as an adultereſs; they looked upon her as the diſgrace of Iſrael; nevertheleſs, it was her modeſty alone which drew upon her theſe inſults; and had not a Daniel been found in her time, who had the courage to doubt a general report, the blood of that innocent woman muſt have ſtained the whole people. And, without departing from our goſpel; were not the ſacrilegious reports, which held out Jeſus as an impoſtor and Samaritan, become the publie diſcourſes of all Judea? The Prieſts and Phariſees, people, to whom the dignity of their ſtation, and the regularity of their manners, attracted the reſpect and confidence of the people, ſtrengthened them by their authority: Nevertheleſs, would you excuſe ſuch amongſt the Jews, as on reports ſo common, ſpoke of the Saviour of the world, as a ſeducer who impoſed on the credulity of the people? You expoſe yourſelf, then, to the guilt of having calumniated your brother; however circulated the rumours againſt him may be, his crime, of which you have not been a witneſs, is always dubious to you: and you do him an injuſtice, when you propagate as true, what you have only heard from public reports, often falſe, and always raſh.

But I go further: when your brother's diſgrace, ſhould even be certain, and the malignity of reports ſhould have added nothing to its criminality; how can you know, that the very ſhame of ſeeing it ſo public may not have recalled him

him to himſelf; and that a ſincere repentance, and tears of compunction, may not have already effaced, and expiated it before God? Years are not always required for grace to triumph over a rebellious heart: there are victories which it leaves not to time; and a public diſgrace often turns out the moment of mercy, which decides upon the converſion of the ſinner. Now, if your brother is in a ſtate of repentance, are you not unjuſt and cruel to revive faults which his penitence has effaced, and which the Lord hath ceaſed to remember? Do you recollect the ſinful woman in the goſpel? Her irregularities were notorious, ſeeing ſhe had been known through the whole city as a proſtitute: nevertheleſs, when the Phariſee reproached her with her ſins, her tears and love had effaced them, at the feet of our Saviour; the goodneſs of God had remitted her errors, yet the malignity of men, was unable to obliterate them.

Laſtly, Your brother's diſgrace was public; that is to ſay, it was confuſedly known, that his conduct was not free from reproach, and you come to particulariſe the circumſtances, to proclaim his deeds, to explain the motives, and to lay open the whole myſtery; to confirm what they but imperfectly knew; to tell them of what they knew not at all; and to applaud yourſelf, for appearing better inſtructed in your brother's misfortune, than thoſe who liſten to you: Some degree of character, though wavering, yet remained to him; he ſtill preſerved, at leaſt, ſome remains of honour, a ſpark of life, and you completely extinguiſh it. I do not add that theſe public reports perhaps originated from people of no character; perſons of neither reputation nor conſequence to convince; hitherto none durſt yield credit to rumours ſo poorly ſupported; but, you, who by your rank, birth, and dignities, have acquired an influence over the minds, remove every ſhadow of doubt

or

or uncertainty: Your name alone, will now ſerve as a proof againſt the innocency of your brother; and in future it will be cited in juſtification of the general reports, Now, can any thing be harder, or more unjuſt, both on account of the injury you do to him and of the ſervice you fail to perform? Your ſilence on his fault might alone perhaps have ſtopt the public defamation; and you would have been cited to clear his innocence, as you now are to blacken it: And what more reſpectable uſe could you have made of your rank and influence? The more you are exalted in the world, the more ought you to be religious, and circumſpect on the reputation of your brethren; the more ought a noble decency to render you reſerved on their errors: The diſcourſes of the vulgar are ſoon forgot; they expire in coming into the world; but the words of the great never fall in vain; and the public is always a faithful echo, either to the praiſes they beſtow, or to the cenſures they allow themſelves to utter. My God! thou teacheſt us, by concealing thyſelf the ſins of men, to conceal them on our part; to reveal our faults, thou waiteſt with a merciful patience, the day when the ſecrets of our hearts ſhall be manifeſted: And we by a raſh malignity, anticipate the time of thy vengeance; we who are ſo intereſted, that the ſecrecies of our hearts, and the myſtery of the conſciences, ſhould not as yet be laid open to thee.

Thus, you particularly, my brethren, whom rank and birth exalt above others, be not ſatisfied with putting a check upon your tongue; according to the advice of the Holy Spirit, preſent a melancholy and ſevere countenance, a ſilence of diſapprobation and indignation, to every defamatory diſcourſe; for the crime is exactly equal, between the malignity of the ſpeaker, and the ſatisfaction of thoſe who liſten to them. Let us ſurround our ears with thorns, that

that they may not be acceſſible to poiſonous inſinuations; that is to ſay, let us not only ſhut them againſt theſe words of blood and gall, but let us return them on their author in a manner equally bitter and mortifying. Were ſlander to find fewer approvers, the kingdom of Jeſus Chriſt would ſoon be purged of that ſcandal: Slander is pleaſing; and a vice which pleaſes ſoon becomes a deſirable talent: We animate ſlander by our applauſes; and as there is no perſon but wiſhes to be applauded, there are few likewiſe who do not ſtudy it, and endeavour to make a merit of ſlandering with ſkill.

But what is ſurpriſing is, that piety itſelf frequently ſerves as a pretext to that vice, which ſaps the very foundations of piety, and which ſincere piety deteſts. This ought to be the laſt part of this diſcourſe; but I ſhall ſay only a ſingle word upon it. Yes, my brethren, ſlander frequently finds in piety itſelf, wherewithal to colour itſelf; It decks itſelf out in the appearance of zeal: Hatred to vice ſeems to authoriſe the cenſure of ſinners: Thoſe who make a profeſſion of virtue, often believe that they are honouring God, and rendering glory to him, when they diſhonour, and exclaim againſt thoſe who offend him; as though the privilege of piety, whoſe ſoul is charity, were to diſpenſe us even from charity. It is not that I wiſh here to juſtify the diſcourſes of the world, and to furniſh it with new traits againſt the zeal of the upright; but, at the ſame time, I ought not to diſſemble, that the liberty which they aſſume, of cenſuring the conduct of their brethren, is one of the moſt common abuſes of piety.

Now, my dear hearer, you whom this diſcourſe regards, liſten to, and never forget the rules which the goſpel preſcribes to true zeal.

1ſtly,

1ſtly, Remember, that the zeal which makes us lament over the ſcandals that diſhonour the church, is contented with lamenting them before God; with praying him not to forget his former mercies; to caſt his propitious regards upon the people; to eſtabliſh his reign in all hearts; and to recal ſinners from their erroneous ways. Behold, the holy manner of lamenting over the diſgraces of your brethren; mention them frequently to the Lord, but forget them in the preſence of men.

2dly, Remember, that piety gives you no right of empire or authority over your brethren: That if you be not eſtabliſhed over them, and reſponſible for their conduct, whether they fall, or remain ſtedfaſt, is the concern of the Lord, and not your's; conſequently, that your continual and public lamentations, over their irregularities, proceed from a principle of pride, malignity, levity, and intolerancy; that the church has its paſtors to ſuperintend the flock; that the ark has its miniſters to ſuſtain it, without needing the interference of any foreign or imprudent ſuccours; and laſtly, that by theſe means, far from correcting your brethren, you diſhonour piety; you juſtify the diſcourſes of the wicked againſt the juſt; and you authoriſe them in ſaying, as formerly in the Book of Wiſdom, Why profeſſeth the righteous, to have a right to fill the ſtreets, and the public places, with their clamours and upbraidings againſt our conduct; and holdeth it out as a point of virtue, to defame us in the minds of our brethren?

3dly, Remember, that the zeal regulated by wiſdom, ſeeks the ſalvation, and not the defamation of the brother it wiſhes to edify; that it loves not to injure; that in order to render itſelf uſeful, it ſtudies to render itſelf amiable; that it is more affected with the misfortune and loſs of its

brother, than irritated againſt, or ſcandaliſed by his errors; that, far from going to publiſh them to others, it would wiſh to be enabled to conceal them from itſelf; and that the zeal which cenſures them, far from leſſening the evil, ſerves only to augment the ſcandal.

4thly, Remember, that the cenſorious zeal which you diſplay, is uſeleſs to your brother, ſeeing he witneſſes it not; that far from being of ſervice, it is even hurtful to his converſion, to which you raiſe up obſtacles, by irritating him againſt your cenſures, ſhould he happen to be informed of them; that it is injurious to his reputation, which you wound; and laſtly, to thoſe that liſten to you, who reſpecting your pretended virtue, never entertain a doubt that they can err, while following your ſteps; and no longer place ſlander among the number of vices. Zeal is humble and has eyes for nothing but its own wants; it is ſimple, and much more diſpoſed to be credulous with regard to good than evil; it is merciful, and is always indulgent to the faults of others, in the ſame proportion as it is ſevere to its own weakneſſes; it is gentle and timorous, and prefers to have failed in ſufficiently blaming vice, to raſhly expoſing itſelf to go too far in cenſuring the ſinner.

Thus, my brethren, you who returned from the errors of the world, now ſerve the Lord, allow me to conclude, with addreſſing to you the ſame words, formerly ſpoken by a holy father, to the ſervants of Jeſus Chriſt, who through an indiſcreet zeal, made no ſcruple of tearing in pieces the characters of their brethren.

"A tongue which has confeſſed Jeſus Chriſt; which has "renounced the errors and ſplendours of the world; which "every day bleſſes the God of peace, at the foot of the altar; "and

"and is often conſecrated, by participation of the holy myſ-
"teries, ſhould no longer be intolerant, dangerous, and full
"of gall and bitterneſs againſt its brethren. It is diſgracing
"religion, after having offered up pure prayers and thankſ-
"givings to the Lord, in the aſſembly of believers, to go
"and ſpit out the venemous traits of the ſerpent, againſt
"thoſe whom the unity of faith, charity, the ſacrament,
"and even their very errors, ſhould render more endeared
"and more reſpectable to you."

By the wiſdom and moderation of our diſcourſes, let us deprive the enemies of virtue, of every occaſion to blaſpheme againſt it; let us correct our brethren, by the ſanctity of our example, rather than by the keeneſs of our cenſures; let us recal them, by living better than they, and not by ſpeaking againſt them; let us render virtue reſpectable by its ſweetneſs, rather than by its ſeverity; let us draw ſinners towards us by compaſſionating, rather than cenſuring their faults; in order that our virtue may be conſpicuous to them, only through our charity and indulgence, and that our tender care to cover and excuſe their faults, may induce them to accuſe and condemn themſelves with more ſeverity, when they perceive the difference of our conduct: By theſe means, we ſhall regain our brethren; we ſhall honour piety; we ſhall overthrow impiety and freethinking; we ſhall deprive the world of all occaſion for thoſe diſcourſes, ſo common, and ſo injurious to real virtue: And, after having uſed mercy towards our brethren, we ſhall with more confidence go to preſent ourſelves before the Father of mercies, and the God of all conſolation, to aſk mercy for ourſelves.

SERMON

SERMON VII.

ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF TIME.

JOHN vii. 33.

Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto Him that ſent me.

AN improper uſe of time, is the ſource of all the diſorders which reign amongſt men. Some paſs their whole life in idleneſs and ſloth, equally uſeleſs to the world, their country and themſelves: Others, in the tumult of buſineſs and worldly affairs. Some appear to exiſt, only for the purpoſe of indulging an unworthy indolence, and eſcaping, by a diverſity of pleaſures, from the wearineſs which every where purſues them, in proportion as they fly from it: Others in a continual ſearch, amidſt the cares of the world, for occupations which may deliver them from themſelves. It appears, that time is a common enemy, againſt which all men have agreed to conſpire: Their whole life is one continued and deplorable anxiety, to rid themſelves of it. The happieſt are thoſe, who beſt ſucceed, in not feeling the weight of its duration; and the principal ſatisfaction they reap, either from frivolous pleaſures, or ſerious occupations, is the abridgment of days and moments, and deliverance from them, almoſt without a preception of their being paſſed.

Time,

Time, that precious depoſit confided to us by the Lord, is therefore become a burden which fatigues and oppreſſes us: We dread, as the greateſt of evils, its deprivation for ever; and we almoſt equally dread the obligation, to ſupport its wearineſs and duration. It is a treaſure which we would wiſh to retain for ever; yet which we cannot ſuffer to remain in our poſſeſſion.

This time, however, of which we make ſo little eſtimation, is the only mean of our eternal ſalvation. We loſe it without regret, which is a crime; we employ it only for worldly purpoſes, which is a madneſs. Let us employ the time which God allows us, becauſe it is ſhort: Let us employ it only in labouring for our ſalvation, becauſe it is only given us, that we may be ſaved: That is to ſay, let us be ſenſible of the value of time, and let us loſe it not; let us know the uſe of it, and employ it only for the purpoſe it was given: By theſe means, we ſhall avoid both the dangers of a ſlothful, and the inconveniences of an hurried life. This is the ſubject of the preſent Diſcourſe.

PART I. Three circumſtances, in general, decide upon the value of things among men: The great advantages which may accrue to us from them: The ſhort ſpace we have to enjoy them: And, laſtly, every hope deſtroyed of ever regaining them, if once loſt. Now, behold, my brethren, the principal motives which ought to render time precious and eſtimable, to every wiſe man: In the firſt place, it is the price of eternity: In the ſecond place, it is ſhort; and we cannot make too much haſte to reap the benefit of it: And laſtly, it is irreparable; for, once loſt, it can never be regained. It is the price of eternity: Yes, my brethren, man, condemned to death by the ſin of his birth

birth, ought to receive life, only to loſe it, even from the moment he has received it. The blood alone of Jeſus Chriſt has effaced this ſentence of death and puniſhment, pronounced againſt all mankind, in the perſon of the firſt ſinner: We live, though the offspring of a father condemned to death, and inheritors ourſelves of his puniſhment, becauſe the Redeemer died for us: The death of Jeſus Chriſt is, therefore, the ſource, and the only claim of right we have to life; our days, our moments, are the firſt bleſſings, which have flowed to us from his croſs; and the time which we ſo vainly loſe, is the price however, of his blood, the fruit of his death, and the merit of his ſacrifice.

Not only as children of Adam, we deſerve no longer to live; but even all the crimes we have added to thoſe of our birth, are become new ſentences of death againſt us. So many times as we have violated the law of the Author of Life, ſo many times, from that moment, ought we to have loſt it.

Every ſinner is, therefore, a child of death and anger; and every time the mercy of God has ſuſpended, after each of our crimes, the ſentence of condemnation and death, it is a new life, as it were, his goodneſs has granted, in order to allow us time to repair the criminal uſe we had hitherto made of our own.

I even ſpeak of the diſeaſes, accidents, and numberleſs dangers, which ſo often have menaced our life; which ſo often we have ſeen to terminate that of our friends and neareſt connections; and from which, his goodneſs has always delivered us. The life which we enjoy, is like a perpetual miracle, therefore, of his divine mercy: The time which

is

is left to us, is the conſequence of an infinity of tender mercies and grace, which compoſes the thread and the train, as it were, of your life: Every moment we breathe, is like a new gift we receive from God; and to waſte that time, and theſe moments, in a deplorable inutility, is to inſult that Infinite Goodneſs, which has granted them to us; to diſſipate an ineſtimable grace, which is not our due; and to deliver up to chance the price of our eternity. Behold, my brethren, the firſt guilt attached to the loſs of time: It is a precious treaſure left to us, though we no longer have any right to it; which is given to us, for the purpoſe alone of purchaſing the kingdom of heaven; and which we diſſipate, as a thing the moſt vile and contemptible, and of which we know not any uſe to make.

In the world, we would regard that man as a fool, who, heir to a great fortune, ſhould allow it to be waſted, through want of care and attention; and ſhould make no uſe of it, either to raiſe himſelf to places and dignities, which might draw him from obſcurity, or in order to confirm to himſelf, a ſolid eſtabliſhment, which might place him in future beyond the reach of any reverſe.

But, my brethren, time is that precious treaſure, which we have inherited from our birth, and which the Almighty leaves to us through pure compaſſion: It is in our poſſeſſion, and it depends upon ourſelves to make a proper uſe of it. It is not in order to exalt ourſelves to frivolous dignities here below, or to worldly grandeurs: Alas! whatever paſſes away, is too vile to be the price of time, which is itſelf the price of eternity: It is in order to be placed in the heavens above, at the ſide of Jeſus Chriſt: It is in order to ſeparate us from the crowd of the children of Adam, above all Cæſars and Kings of the earth, in that immortal

ſociety

ſociety of the happy, who ſhall all be kings, and whoſe reign ſhall have no bounds, but thoſe of eternity.

What madneſs, then, to make no uſe of a treaſure ſo inеſtimable; In frivolous amuſements, to waſte that time, which may be the price of eternal ſalvation; and to allow the hopes of our immortality, to be diſſipated in ſmoke! Yes, my brethren, there is not a day, an hour, a moment, but which, properly employed, may merit us heaven. A ſingle day loſt, ought, therefore, to leave to us remorſes, a thouſand times more lively and poignant, than the failure of the greateſt worldly proſpects; yet, nevertheleſs, this time is a burden to us: Our whole life is only one continued ſcience to loſe it; and in ſpite of all our anxieties to waſte it, there always, however, remains more than we know how to employ; and yet, the thing upon the earth we have the ſmalleſt value for, is our time: Our acts of kindneſs, we reſerve for our friends: Our bounties, for our dependents: Our riches, for our children and relations: Our praiſes, for thoſe who appear worthy of them: Our time we give to all the world: We expoſe it, as I may ſay, a prey to all mankind: They even do us a pleaſure in delivering us from it: It is a weight, as it were, which we ſupport in the midſt of the world, while inceſſantly in ſearch of ſome one who may eaſe us of its burden. In this manner, time, that gift of God, that moſt precious bleſſing of his clemency, and which ought to be the price of our eternity, occaſions all our embarraſſments, all our wearineſſes, and becomes the moſt oppreſſive burden of our life.

But a ſecond reaſon, which makes us feel, ſtill more ſenſibly, our abſurdity in ſetting ſo little value upon the time the Almighty leaves to us, is, that not only it is the price of our eternity, but likewiſe, it is ſhort, and we cannot haſten

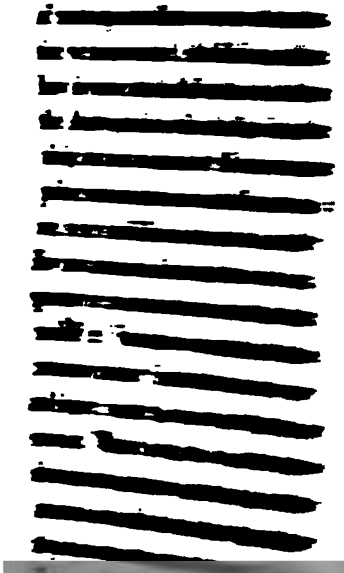
haſten too much to employ it to advantage. For, my brethren, had we even a long ſeries of ages to exiſt upon the earth, that ſpace would, in truth, be ſtill too ſhort to be employed in meriting everlaſting happineſs; yet its duration would at leaſt enable us to retrieve thoſe accidental loſſes. The days and moments loſt, would at leaſt form only a point, ſcarcely perceptible, in that long ſeries of ages we ſhould have to paſs here below. But, alas! Our whole life is itſelf but an imperceptible point: The longeſt endures ſo little: Our days and our years are ſhut up in ſuch narrow limits, that we ſee not what we can have ſtill to loſe, in a ſpace ſo ſhort and rapid. We are only, as I may ſay, a moment upon the earth; like thoſe fiery exhalations, which, in the obſcurity of night, are ſeen wandering in the air, we only appear, to vaniſh in a moment, and be replunged, for ever, into our original and everlaſting darkneſs: The exhibition we make to the world is but a flaſh, which is extinguiſhed almoſt in the ſame moment it exiſts: We ſay it ourſelves every day. Alas! How can we take days and hours of reſt, from a life, which is itſelf but a moment? And beſides, if you retrench from that moment, all you are under the neceſſity of allowing to the indiſpenſable neceſſities of the body, to the duties of your ſtation, to unexpected events, and the inevitable complaiſances due to ſociety, what remains for yourſelf, for God, and for eternity? And are we not worthy of pity; we, who know not how to employ the little which remains to us, and who fly to the aſſiſtance of a thouſand artifices to abridge its duration?

To the little time, my brethren, we have to live upon the earth, add the number of paſt crimes, which we have to expiate in this ſhort interval. How many iniquities are collected upon our heads, ſince our firſt years: Alas! Ten

lives, like ours, would ſcarcely ſuffice to expiate
them: The time would ſtill be too ſhort; and it
neceſſary to call upon the goodneſs of God, to p
duration of our penance. Great God! What p
remain to me for pleaſures and indolence, in a li
and ſo criminal as mine? What place, then, ca
ſports and amuſements find in an interval ſo
which altogether would not ſuffice to expiate a
of my crimes?

Ah! my brethren, do we even think upon it?
nal condemned to death, and to whom a ſingle
allowed to endeavour towards obtaining his pard
he find hours and moments ſtill to trifle away?
complain of the length of the time, which the
and goodneſs of his judge had awarded him?
be embarraſſed how to uſe it? Would he ſearch
lous amuſements to aſſiſt him to paſs thoſe pre
ments, which were left him to merit his pard
liverance? Would he not endeavour to profit
val ſo deciſive with regard to his deſtiny? W
replace, by the anxiety, vivacity, and contin
exertions, what might be wanting from the b
time allowed to him? Fools that we are! ou
pronounced; our guilt renders our condemn
We are left a ſingle day to ſhun the evil, and
rigour of our eternal decree: And this only
day, we indolently paſs in occupations vai
puerile.

This
ſeek to
cient
hav



ter fulfilling their duties, are un-
ding ſome moments of relaxation
n nature: But you, if you have
t is from the continuance of your
you call your recreations: It is
nate gaming, of which the dura-
neceſſary, beſides the loſs of time,
quitting it, of application to any
n. What recreation can you find
eſs paſſion, which occupies almoſt
our health; deranges your fortune,
inual ſport of a miſerable chance?
characters that we find neither or-
All ſerious duties forgotten; diſ-
en miſerably educated; affairs de-
rn and contempt attached to their
unate poſterity? The paſſion of
unaccompanied; and to thoſe of
ways the ſource, or the occaſion of
the recreations you believe inno-
up the empty moments of the day.

ow many of the reprobate, in the
nd puniſhments, entreat from the
ne of thoſe moments, which we
loy; and could their requeſt be
d they not make of that precious
ars of compunction and penitence!
ſupplications, to ſoften the Father
luce his paternal feelings to reſtore
his only moment is nevertheleſs re-
told, exiſts no more for them; and
embarraſſed with the little you are
you, my brethren; and on the bed
of

ſtill find ſo many ſpare moments in the day? My God! How many holy characters have in ſolitude complained, that their days paſſed too rapidly away; have borrowed from the night, what the brevity of the day had taken from their labours and zeal; have lamented, even in the calm and leiſure of their ſolitude, that ſufficient time remained not for them to publiſh thy praiſes, and eternal mercies: And we, charged with a multiplicity of cares; we, in the midſt of the ſolicitudes and engagements of the age, which abſorb almoſt all our days and moments; we, reſponſible to our relations, to our children, to our friends, to our inferiors, to our ſuperiors, to our ſtations, to our country, for ſuch an infinity of duties; we ſtill find a void in our life; and the little which remains to us, we think too long to be employed in ſerving and bleſſing thy holy name?

But we are happy, you ſay, when we know how to amuſe ourſelves, and innocently to paſs away the time. But how do you know that your courſe is not already run; and that you do not perhaps touch the fatal moment which commences your eternity? Does your time belong to you, to be diſpoſed of as you pleaſe? Time itſelf paſſes away ſo ſoon; and are ſo many amuſements neceſſary to aſſiſt it in paſſing ſtill more rapidly?

But, is time given to you for nothing ſerious, great, and eternal; nothing worthy of the elevation and deſtiny of man? And the Chriſtian and inheritor of heaven, is he upon the earth, only to amuſe himſelf?

But are there not, you ſay, many innocent recreations in life? I grant there are many: But recreations ſuppoſe pains and cares, which have preceded them; while your whole life is one continued recreation. Recreations are permitted

permitted to thoſe who, after fulfilling their duties, are under the neceſſity of according ſome moments of relaxation to the weakneſs of human nature: But you, if you have occaſion for relaxation, it is from the continuance of your pleaſures, and even what you call your recreations: It is from the rage of inordinate gaming, of which the duration and earneſt attention neceſſary, beſides the loſs of time, render you incapable, on quitting it, of application to any other duty of your ſtation. What recreation can you find in a lawleſs and boundleſs paſſion, which occupies almoſt your whole life; ruins your health; deranges your fortune, and renders you the continual ſport of a miſerable chance? And it is not with ſuch characters that we find neither order, rule, or diſcipline? All ſerious duties forgotten; diſorderly ſervants; children miſerably educated; affairs declining; and public ſcorn and contempt attached to their names, and their unfortunate poſterity? The paſſion of gaming is almoſt never unaccompanied; and to thoſe of one ſex eſpecially, is always the ſource, or the occaſion of all the others: Theſe are the recreations you believe innocent, and neceſſary to fill up the empty moments of the day.

Ah! my brethren, how many of the reprobate, in the midſt of their anguiſh and puniſhments, entreat from the mercy of God, only one of thoſe moments, which we know not how to employ; and could their requeſt be granted, what uſe would they not make of that precious moment? How many tears of compunction and penitence! How many prayers and ſupplications, to ſoften the Father of Mercies, and to induce his paternal feelings to reſtore to them his affection! This only moment is nevertheleſs refuſed: Time, they are told, exiſts no more for them; and you find yourſelves embarraſſed with the little you are left? God will judge you, my brethren; and on the bed of

of death, and in that terrible hour which ſhall ſurpriſe you, in vain ſhall you demand a little more time: In vain ſhall you promiſe to God, a more Chriſtian uſe of what you will endeavour to obtain: His juſtice, without pity, will cut the thread of your days: And that time, which now oppreſſes and embarraſſes you, ſhall then be denied.

But in what our blindneſs here is ſtill more conſpicuous, is, that not only the time which we loſe with ſo much indifference and inſenſibility, is ſhort and precious; but likewiſe irreparable; for once loſt, it is for ever gone, without reſource.

I ſay irreparable: For, in the firſt place, riches, honours, reputation, and favour, though once loſt, may again be retrieved. We may even replace each of theſe loſſes, by other acquirements, which will repay us with uſury: But the moments loſt in inutility, are ſo many means of ſalvation, which we never again can poſſeſs, but which are for ever cut off from the number, which God, in his compaſſion, had allotted to us. Indeed, in a ſpace ſo ſhort as we have to live, there cannot be a doubt, but that the Almighty had his particular deſigns, with regard to each of our days and moments; that he hath marked the uſe we ought to have made of them; the connection they were to have with our eternal ſalvation; and that to each of them he hath attached aſſiſtances of grace, in order to conſummate the work of our ſanctification. Now, theſe days and moments being loſt, the grace attached to them muſt be equally ſo: The moments of God are finiſhed, and return no more: The courſe of his mercies is regulated: We believed they were only uſeleſs moments we had loſt; and with them we have loſt ineſtimable ſuccours of grace; which

which we find deducted from thoſe the goodneſs of God had deſtined for us.

In the *ſecond* place, Irreparable, becauſe every day, every moment, ought to advance us a ſtep nearer heaven: Now, the days and moments loſt leaving us in arrear, and the duration of our courſe being alſo determined, the end arrives when we are yet at a diſtance; when there is no longer time to ſupply the remainder of the career; or, at leaſt, to regain the loſt moments, and reach the goal, we muſt double our ſpeed: In one day, fill up the courſe of many years; make the moſt heroic exertions; and haſten in a degree, even beyond our ſtrength: Proceed to exceſſes of holineſs, which are miracles of grace, and of which the generality of men are incapable; and conſummate, in ſmall interval, what ought to be the labour of a whole life.

In the *laſt* place, Irreparable, with reſpect to the works of penance and reparation, of which, in a certain period of life, we are capable, but are no longer ſo, when we wait the infirmities of a more advanced age. For, after all, it is in vain to ſay then, that God expects not impoſſibilities; that there is a penance for every age; and that religion does not wiſh us to haſten our days, under the pretext of expiating our crimes: It is you who have placed yourſelves in this ſtate of impoſſibility: Your ſins diminiſh not your obligations: Guilt muſt be puniſhed, in order to be effaced. The Almighty had allowed you both time and ſtrength, to ſatisfy this immutable and eternal law: This time you have waſted in accumulating new debts: This ſtrength you have exhauſted, either by new exceſſes, or at leaſt, without making any uſe of it, to further the deſigns of God reſpecting you: The Almighty muſt there-

fore

fore do, what you have never done yourſelves, and puniſh after your death, the crimes you have never been inclined to expiate during your life.

This is to ſay, in order to concentrate all theſe reflections, that with every moment of our life, it is as with our death: We die only once: and from thence we conclude, that we muſt die in a proper ſtate, becauſe there is no longer a poſſibility of returning, to repair, by a ſecond death the evil of the firſt: In like manner, we only once exiſt, ſuch and ſuch moments: We cannot return upon our ſteps, and, by commencing a new road, repair the errors and faults of our firſt path: In like manner, every moment of our life which we ſacrifice, becomes a point fixed for our eternity; that moment loſt, ſhall change no more: It ſhall eternally be the ſame; it will be recalled to us, ſuch as we had paſſed it, and will be marked with that ineffaceable ſtamp. How miſerable, then is our blindneſs, my brethren; we, whoſe life is only one continued attention to loſe the time which returns no more, and with ſo rapid a courſe, flies to precipitate itſelf into the abyſs of eternity!

Great God! Thou who art the ſovereign diſpenſer of times and moments: Thou in whoſe hands are our days and our years, with what eyes muſt thou behold us loſing and diſſipating the moments of which thou alone knoweſt the duration; of which, in irrevocable characters, thou haſt marked the courſe and meaſure; moments, which thou draweſt from the treaſure of thine eternal mercies, to allow us time for penitence: Moments, which every day, thy juſtice preſſes thee to abridge, as a puniſhment for their abuſe; moments, which, every day before our eyes, thou refuſeſt to ſo many ſinners, leſs culpable than we, whom a terrible death ſurpriſes, and drags into the gulf of thine eternal vengeance;

vengeance: Moments, in a word, which we ſhall not perhaps long enjoy; and of which thou ſoon intendeſt to terminate the melancholy career! Great God, Behold the greateſt, and the beſt part of my life, already paſt, and wholly loſt: In all my days, there has not hitherto been a ſingle ſerious one: A ſingle day for thee, for my ſalvation, and for eternity: My whole life is but a vapour, which leaves nothing real or ſolid in the hand of him who recals it. Shall I, to the end, drag on my days in this melancholy inutility; in this wearineſs which purſues me, in the midſt of my pleaſures, and the efforts which unavailingly I make to avoid it? Shall the laſt hour ſurpriſe me, loaded with the void of my whole years? And in all my courſe, ſhall there be nothing ſerious or important, but the laſt moment, which will terminate it for ever, and decide my everlaſting deſtiny? Great God! what a life, for a ſoul deſtined to ſerve Thee, called to the immortal ſociety of thy Son, and thy ſaints, enriched with thy gifts, and in conſequence of them, capable of works worthy of eternity! What a life, is that life, which, in reality, is nothing, has nothing in view, and fills up a time which is deciſive of its eternal deſtiny, in doing nothing, and reckoning as well paſſed, thoſe days and hours which imperceptibly ſlip away!

But if inutility be oppoſite to the price of time, irregularity and multiplicity of occupations are not leſs ſo, to the proper order of time, and to the Chriſtian uſe we ought to make of it. You have juſt ſeen the dangers of a ſlothful, and I will now lay down before you the inconveniencies of a hurried life.

PART II. To every thing we have hitherto ſaid, my brethren, the majority of thoſe who liſten to me, have no doubt ſecretly oppoſed, that their life is any thing but ſloth-

ful and uſeleſs; that ſcarcely can they ſuffice, for the duties, good offices, and endleſs engagements of their ſtations; that they live in an eternal viciſſitude of occupations and buſineſs, which abſorbs their whole life; and that they think themſelves happy, when they can accompliſh a moment for themſelves, and enjoy at leiſure, the ſituation which their fortune denies to them.

Now this, my brethren, is a new way of abuſing time, ſtill more dangerous than even inutility and indolence. In effect the Chriſtian uſe of time, is not merely the filling up of all its moments; it is that of filling them up in order, and according to the will of the Lord, who gives them to us: The life of faith, is a life of regularity and wiſdom: Fancy, paſſion, pride, and cupidity, are falſe principles of conduct, ſince they themſelves are only a derangement of the mind and heart; and that order and reaſon ought to be our only guides.

Nevertheleſs the life of the majority of men, is a life always occupied, and always uſeleſs; always laborious, and always void: Their paſſions give birth to all their motions: Theſe are the great ſprings which agitate men; make them run here and there like madmen; and leave them not a ſingle moment's tranquillity; and in filling up all their moments, they ſeek not to fulfil their duties, but to deliver themſelves up to their reſtleſſneſs, and to ſatisfy their iniquitous deſires.

But in what doth this order conſiſt, which ought to regulate the meaſure of our occupations, and to ſanctify the uſe of our time? It conſiſts, in the firſt place, in limiting ourſelves to the occupations attached to our ſtations: In not ſeeking places and ſituations which may multiply them; and

and in not reckoning among our duties, the cares and embarraſſments, which anxiety, or our paſſions, alone generate within us. Secondly, However agitated may be our ſituations, amidſt all our occupations, to regard as the moſt eſſential, and the moſt privileged, thoſe we owe to our ſalvation.

I ſay, in the firſt place, not to reckon amongſt the occupations which ſanctify the uſe of our time, thoſe which reſtleſſneſs, or the paſſions alone generate.

Reſtleſſneſs: Yes, my brethren, we all wiſh to avoid ourſelves: To the generality of men, nothing is more melancholy and diſagreeable, than to find themſelves alone, and obliged to review their own hearts. As vain paſſions carry us away; as many criminal attachments ſtain us; and as many thouſands illicit deſires occupy every moment of our heart; in entering into ourſelves, we find only an anſwer of death, a frightful void, cruel remorſes, dark thoughts, and melancholy reflections. We ſearch, therefore, in the variety of occupations, and continual diſtractions, an oblivion of ourſelves: We dread leiſure as the ſignal of wearineſs; and we expect to find in the confuſion and multiplicity of external cares, that happy intoxication, which enables us to go on without perceiving it, and makes us no longer to feel the weight of ourſelves.

But alas! we deceive ourſelves: Wearineſs is never found but in irregularity, and in a life of confuſion, where every thing is out of its place: It is in living by hazard, that we are a burden to ourſelves: that we continually ſearch after new occupations, and that diſguſt ſoon obliges us to repent that we ever ſought for them; that we inceſſantly change our ſituation, in order to fly from ourſelves;

and

and that wherever we go, we carry ourſelves: In a word, that our whole life is but a diverſified art, to ſhun wearineſs, and a miſerable talent to find it. Wherever order is not, wearineſs muſt neceſſarily be found: and far from a life of irregularity and confuſion being a remedy, on the contrary, it is the moſt fruitful ſource, and univerſal cauſe of it.

The juſt ſouls who live in regularity; they who yield nothing to caprice and temper; whoſe every occupation is exactly where it ought to be; whoſe moments are filled up, according to their deſtination, and to the will of the Lord who directs them, find in order, a perfect remedy againſt, and protection from wearineſs. That wiſe uniformity in the practice of duties, which appear ſo gloomy in the eyes of the world, is the ſource of their joy, and of that happy equality of temper, which nothing can derange: Never embarraſſed with the preſent time, which ſtated duties occupy: Never in pain with regard to the future, for which new duties are arranged: Never delivered up to themſelves, by the change of occupations, which ſucceed each other: Their days appear as moments, becauſe every moment is in its place: Time hangs not upon them, becauſe it always has its diſtinction and uſe: and in the arrangement of an uniform an occupied life, they find that peace, and that joy, which the reſt of men in vain ſearch for in the confuſion of a continual agitation.

Reſtleſſneſs, by multiplying our occupations, leaves us, therefore, a prey to wearineſs and diſguſt; nor yet does it ſanctify the uſe of our time: For if the moments, not regulated by the order of God, are moments loſt, however occupied they may otherwiſe be; if the life of man ought to be a life of wiſdom and regularity, where every occupation has its allotted place; what can be more oppoſite to ſuch a life than this inconſiſtency, theſe eternal fluctuations in

in which reſtleſſneſs makes us paſs our time? But the paſſions which keep us in perpetual motion, do not form for us more legitimate employments.

. . . . . .

Yes, my brethren, I know that it is only in a certain age of life, that we appear occupied with frivolity and pleaſures; more ſerious cares, and more ſolid avocations ſucceed to the indolence, and to the vain amuſements of our younger years; and after waſting our youth in ſloth and in pleaſures, we appropriate our maturity, to our country, to fortune, and to ourſelves; but ſtill with reſpect to heaven we continue the ſame. I confeſs that we owe our ſervices to our country, to our Sovereign, and to the national cares; that amongſt the number of duties preſcribed to us by religion, it places that of zeal for our Sovereign, and for the intereſt and glory of our country; and that religion alone can form faithful ſubjects, and citizens ever ready to ſacrifice their all for the general good. But religion wiſhes not that pride and ambition ſhould raſhly plunge us in public affairs; and that we ſhould anxiouſly endeavour, by all poſſible means, by intrigue and ſolicitations, to attain places, where, owing every thing to others, not a moment is left for ourſelves: Religion wiſhes us to dread theſe tumultuous ſituations; to give ourſelves up to them with regret and trembling, when the order of God, and the authority of our maſters, call us to them; and where the choice left to us, always to prefer the ſafety and leiſure of a private ſtation, to the dangers and eclat of dignities and places. Alas! We have a ſhort time to exiſt upon the earth, and the ſalvation, or eternal condemnation which awaits us, is ſo near, that every other care ought to be melancholy and burdenſome to us; and every thing which diverts our attention from that grand object, for which we are allowed only a ſmall portion of days, ought to appear as the heavieſt misfortune.

In the multiplicity of our occupations, we are ſure to ſacrifice thoſe which we ought to beſtow on eternity. Yes, my brethren, in place of retrenching from our amuſements; from the ceremonies which idleneſs alone has eſtabliſhed; from the duties which ambition multiplies; from the cares and attentions which we beſtow on a vain dreſs, which cuſtom and effeminacy have rendered endleſs: In place of retrenching from theſe, at leaſt ſome little time every day, ſcarcely do they leave us ſome accidental remains, which by chance have eſcaped from the world and pleaſure: Some rapid moments, the world wiſhes not; with which we are perhaps embarraſſed; and which we know not how to diſpoſe of otherwiſe. So long as the world chuſes to engage us; ſo long as it continues to offer pleaſures, duties, trifles, and complaiſances, we yield ourſelves up to it with delight. When all is over, and we no longer know how to fill up our vacant hours, we then conſecrate to ſome languid practices of religion, thoſe outcaſt moments, which wearineſs, or a deficiency of pleaſures, leaves us: Properly ſpeaking, they are moments of recreation, which we beſtow upon ourſelves rather than upon God: An interval, we place between the world and us, in order to return to it with more reliſh; and breathe a little from the fatigue, the diſguſt, and the ſatiety, which are the neceſſary conſequences of a life devoted to the world and pleaſures, which, prolonged beyond a certain meaſure, are immediately followed by wearineſs and laſſitude.

Such is the uſe, which even perſons, who deck themſelves out with a reputation for virtue, make of their time. Their whole life is one continue dand criminal preference, given to the world, fortune, ceremony, and pleaſures, above the buſineſs of their ſalvation: All is filled up by what they give to their maſters, friends, places, and appetites,

tites, and nothing remains for God and for eternity. It would appear, that time is given to us, in the firſt place, for the world, ambition, and earthly cares; and ſhould any portion of it happen afterwards to remain, that we are entitled to praiſe, when we beſtow it on our ſalvation.

Great God! For what purpoſe doſt thou leave us on the earth, but to render ourſelves worthy of thine eternal poſſeſſion? Every thing we do for the world, ſhall periſh with it; whatſoever we do for thee, ſhall be immortal. All our cares and attentions here, are in general for maſters, ungrateful, unjuſt, difficult to pleaſe, weak, and incapable of rendering us happy: The duties we render to thee, are given to a Lord and Maſter, faithful, juſt, compaſſionate, almighty, and who alone can recompenſe thoſe who ſerve him: The cares of the earth however brilliant, are foreign to us; they are unworthy of us; it is not for them we are created; we ought only to devote ourſelves to them as they paſs, in order to ſatisfy the tranſitory ties they exact from us, and which connect us with mankind: The cares of eternity alone are worthy of the nobility of our hopes, and fill all the grandeur and dignity of our deſtiny. Without the cares of ſalvation, thoſe of this earth are profane and ſullied; they are no longer but vain, fruitleſs, and almoſt always criminal agitations: The cares of ſalvation alone conſecrate and ſanctify them; give to them reality, elevation, the price and the merit which they wanted. All other cares wound, trouble, harden, and render us miſerable; but the duties we render to thee, leave us a real and heartfelt joy: They ſtrengthen, calm, and conſole us; and even ſoften the anguiſh and bitterneſs of the others. In a word, we owe ourſelves to thee, O my God! before maſters, inferiors, friends, or connections. Thou alone haſt the firſt right over our hearts and reaſon, which are the

gifts of thy liberal hand; it is for thee, therefore, that in the firſt place we ought to make uſe of them; and we are Chriſtians, before we are princes, ſubjects, public characters, or any thing elſe on the earth.

You will perhaps tell us, my brethren, that in fulfilling the painful and endleſs duties attached to your ſtation, you believe that you ſerve God, accompliſh your meaſure of righteouſneſs, and labour toward your ſalvation. I grant it: But we muſt fulfil theſe duties, according to the views of the Lord, from motives of faith, and in the true ſpirit of religion and piety. God reckons only what we do for him: Of all our pains, fatigues, ſubmiſſions and ſacrifices, he accepts only thoſe which are offered to his glory, and not to our own; and our days are only full in his ſight, when they are full for eternity. All actions, which have nothing for their object but the world; a fame limited to this earth; a periſhable fortune; ſome praiſes they may attract to us from men; or ſome degree of grandeur and reputation, to which they may raiſe us here below, are nothing in his preſence; or, at leaſt, are only puerile amuſements, unworthy of the majeſty of his regards.

Thus, my brethren, how different are the judgments of God from thoſe of the world! In the world we call beautiful that ſplendid life, in which great actions are numbered, victories gained, difficult negociations concluded, undertakings ſucceſsfully conducted, illuſtrious employments ſupported with reputation, eminent dignities acquired by important ſervices, and exerciſed with glory; a life which paſſes into hiſtory, fills the public monuments, and of which the remembrance ſhall be preſerved to the lateſt poſterity: Such, according to the world, is a beautiful life. But if, in all this, they have ſought more their own, than the

the glory of God; if they have had nothing more in view than to erect to themſelves a periſhable edifice of grandeur on the earth, in vain ſhall they have furniſhed a ſplendid career to the eyes of men; in the ſight of God, it is a life loſt: In vain ſhall hiſtory record us; we ſhall be effaced from the book of life, and from the eternal hiſtories; in vain ſhall our actions be the admiration of ages to come; they ſhall not be written on the immortal columns of the Heavenly Temple. In vain ſhall we have acted a dignified part upon the ſtage of all earthly ages; in the eternal ages we ſhall be as thoſe who never were: In vain ſhall our titles and dignities be preſerved upon the marble and braſs; as the fingers of men have written them, they ſhall periſh with them; and what the finger of God ſhall have written, will alone endure as long as himſelf. In vain ſhall our life be propoſed as a model to the ambition of our deſcendants; its reality exiſting only in the paſſions of men, from the moment they ſhall ceaſe to have paſſions, and the objects which inflame them ſhall be annihilated, this life ſhall be nothing, and ſhall be replunged into non-entity, with the world which admired it.

For candidly, my brethren, can you really wiſh, that in that awful and terrible day, when righteouſneſs itſelf ſhall be judged, the Almighty ſhould give you credit for all the pains, cares, and diſguſts you have experienced and devoured, in order to raiſe yourſelves in the world? That he ſhould regard, as well employed, the time you have ſacrificed to the world, fortune, glory, and the elevation of your name and race, as if you were upon the earth only for yourſelves? That he ſhould place among the number of your works of ſalvation, thoſe which have only had for principle ambition, pride, envy, and ſelf-intereſt; and that he ſhould reckon your vices amongſt your virtues.

And

And what will you be able to ſay to him, on the bed of death, when he ſhall enter into judgment with you, and demand an account of the time, which he had only granted you, to be employed in glorifying and ſerving him? Will you ſay to him: Lord, I have gained many victories; I have uſefully and glorioufly ſerved my prince and country; I have eſtabliſhed to myſelf a great name amongſt men? alas! you have never been able to gain a victory over yourſelf: You have uſefully ſerved the kings of the earth, and you have neglected, with contempt, the ſervice of the King of kings. You have eſtabliſhed to yourſelf a great name amongſt men; and your name is unknown amongſt the choſen of God: Time loſt for eternity. Will you ſay to him: I have conducted the moſt difficult negociations, I have concluded the moſt important treaties; I have managed the intereſts and fortunes of princes; I have been in the ſecrets, and in the councils of Kings? Alas! you have concluded treaties and alliances with men, and you have a thouſand times violated the holy covenant you have entered into with God: You have managed the intereſts of princes, and you have never known how to manage the intereſts of your ſalvation: You have entered into the ſecrets of kings, and you have ever been ignorant of the ſecrets of the kingdom of heaven: Time loſt for eternity. Will you ſay to him: My whole life has been only an inceſſant toil, and a painful and continued occupation? alas! you have always toiled, and you have never been able to do any thing to ſave your ſoul: Time loſt for eternity. Will you ſay to him: I have eſtabliſhed my children in the world: I have exalted my relations; I have been uſeful to my friends; I have augmented the patrimony of my anceſtors? alas! you have bequeathed great eſtabliſhments to your children, and you have not left them the fear of the Lord, by bringing them up, and eſtabliſhing them in faith and in piety:

You

You have augmented the patrimony of your anceſtors, and you have diſſipated the gifts of grace, and the patrimony of Jeſus Chriſt: Time loſt for eternity. Will you ſay to him: I have made the moſt profound ſtudies; I have enriched the public with uſeful and curious works; I have perfected the ſciences by new diſcoveries; I improved my great talents, and rendered them uſeful to mankind? alas! The great talent confided to you, was that of faith and grace, of which you have made no uſe: You have rendered yourſelf learned in the ſciences of men, and you have always been ignorant in the ſcience of the Holy: Time loſt for eternity. In a word, will you tell him: I have paſſed my life in fulfilling the duties, and good offices of my ſtation: I have gained friends; I have rendered myſelf uſeful and agreeable to my maſters? alas! You have had friends to boaſt of on the earth, and you have acquired none to yourſelf in heaven: You have made every exertion to pleaſe men, and you have done nothing to pleaſe the Almighty: Time loſt for eternity.

No, my brethren, what a frightful void, the greateſt part of men, who had governed ſtates and empires, who appeared to regulate the whole univerſe, and had filled in it the moſt diſtinguiſhed places; who were the ſubjects of every converſation, and of the deſires and hopes of men; who engroſſed almoſt alone, the whole attentions of the earth; what a frightful void, will they, on the bed of death, find their whole life to be? Whilſt the days of the pious and ritired ſoul, regarded by them as obſcure and indolent, ſhall appear full, complete, occupied, marked each by ſome victory of faith, and worthy of being celebrated by the eternal ſongs.

Meditate, my brethren, on theſe holy truths: Time is ſhort; it is irreparable: It is the price of your eternal felicity:

city: It is given to you, only in order to render you worthy of that felicity: Calculate, therefore, what portion of it you ſhould beſtow on the world, pleaſures, fortune, and on your ſalvation. My brethren, ſays the Apoſtle, time is ſhort: Let us therefore uſe the world, as not abuſing it; let us poſſeſs our riches, places, dignities and titles, as though we poſſeſſed them not; let us enjoy the favour of our ſuperiors, and the eſteem of men, as though we enjoyed them not; they are only ſhadows, which vaniſh, and leave us for ever; and let us only reckon upon as real in our whole life, the moments which we have employed for heaven.

SERMON

SERMON VIII.

THE CERTAINTY OF A FUTURE STATE.

MATT. XXV. 46.

And theſe ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſhment: but the righteous into life eternal.

BEHOLD, to what at laſt ſhall be brought the deſires, hopes, counſels, and enterpriſes of men: Behold, upon what at laſt ſhall ſplit, the vain reflections of ſages and freethinkers; the doubts and eternal uncertainties of unbelievers; the vaſt projects of conquerors; the monuments of human glory; the cares of ambition; the diſtinction of talents; the diſquietudes of fortune; the proſperity of empires, and all the inſignificant revolutions of the earth. Such ſhall be the awful concluſion, which will unravel the myſteries of Providence, on the diverſe lots of the children of Adam, and juſtify its conduct in the government of the univerſe. This life is, therefore, but a rapid inſtant, and the commencement of an eternal futurity. Torments, without end, or the delights of an immortal felicity, ſhall be our lot, as well as that of all men.

Nevertheleſs, the view of this grand object, which formerly had been able to ſtartle the ferocity of tyrants; to ſhake the fortitude of philoſophers; to diſturb the effeminacy and voluptuouſneſs of Cæſars; to ſoften the moſt barbar-

ous

ous nations; to form ſo many martyrs; to people the deſerts, and to bring the whole univerſe ſubmiſſive to the yoke of the croſs: This image, ſo terrifying, is now almoſt deſtined to alarm the timidity of merely the common people: Theſe grand objects are become like vulgar paintings, which we dare no longer expoſe to the falſe delicacy of the great, and connoiſſeurs of the world; and the only fruit we generally reap from this ſort of diſcourſes, is to make it be inquired, perhaps, after quitting them, whether every thing ſhall take place, as we have ſaid.

For, my brethren, we live in times in which the faith of many has been wrecked; in which a wretched philoſophy, like a mortal venom, ſpreads in ſecret, and undertakes to juſtify abominations and vices, againſt the belief of future puniſhment and rewards. This evil has paſſed from the palaces of the great, even to the people, and every where the piety of the juſt is inſulted by the diſcourſes of irreligion, and the maxims of freethinking.

And certainly, I am not ſurpriſed that diſſolute men ſhould doubt of a future ſtate, and endeavour to combat, or to weaken a truth, ſo capable of diſturbing their criminal ſenſualities. It is horrible to look forward to everlaſting miſery. The world has no pleaſure, which can endure a thought ſo ſhocking; conſequently, it has always endeavoured to efface it from the heart and mind of man. It well knows, that the belief of a future ſtate, is a troubleſome check on the human paſſions, and that it will never ſucceed in making tranquil and reſolute libertines, without having firſt made unbelievers.

Let us deprive, then, the corruption of the human heart of ſo wretched and weak a ſupport: Let us prove to diſſolute

lute ſouls, that they ſhall ſurvive their debaucheries; that all dies not with the body; that this life ſhall finiſh their crimes, but not their miſery; and more completely to confound impiety, let us attack it in the vain pretexts on which it depends.

1*ſtly*, who knows, ſay the impious, that all dies not with us? Is that other life, of which we are told, quite certain? Who has ever returned, to inform us of it?

2*dly*, Is it worthy of the majeſty of God, ſay they again, to demean himſelf, by any attention to what paſſes among men? What matters it to him, that worms of the earth, like us, murder, deceive, and tear each other, live in luxury or intemperance? Is it not preſumptuous in man, to ſuppoſe, that an Almighty God is occupied with him?

Laſtly, What likelihood, add they, that God, having made man ſuch as he is, will puniſh as crimes, inherent inclinations to pleaſure, which nature has given us. Behold the philoſophy of the voluptuary: The uncertainty of a future ſtate: The majeſty of God, which a vile creature cannot offend; and the weakneſs of man, which, being born with him, he would be unjuſt, of it, to conſtitute a crime.

Let us then prove, in the firſt place, againſt the uncertainty of the impious, that the truth of a future ſtate is juſtified by the pureſt lights of reaſon: Secondly, againſt the unworthy idea, grounded upon the greatneſs of God, that this truth is juſtified by his wiſdom and glory: Laſtly; againſt the pretext, drawn from the weakneſs of man, that it is juſtified, even by the teſtimony of his own conſcience. The certainty of a future ſtate: The neceſſity of a future

ſtate: The inward acknowledgment of a future ſtate: Behold the ſubject, and arrangement of my diſcourſe.

O God! Attend not to the inſults, which the blaſphemies of impiety offer to thy glory; regard only, and ſee, of what reaſon is capable, when thy light is withdrawn. In the wickedneſs of the human mind, behold, all the ſeverity of thy juſtice, when it abandons it, that the more I expoſe the fooliſh blaſphemies of the impious ſoul, the more may he become in thy ſight, an object worthy of thy pity, and of the treaſures of thine infinite mercy.

PART I. It ſurely is melancholy to have to juſtify before believers, the moſt conſolatory truth of faith: to come, to prove to men, to whom Jeſus Chriſt has been declared, that their being is not a wild aſſemblage, and the wretched offspring of chance: that a wiſe and an Almighty artificer, has preſided at our formation and birth; that a ſpark of immortality animates our clay; that a portion of us ſhall ſurvive ourſelves; and that, on quitting this earthly manſion, our ſoul ſhall return to the boſom of God, from whence it came, and go to inhabit the eternal region of the living, where to each one ſhall be rendered according to his works.

It was with this truth that Paul began to announce faith, before the Athenian judges. We are the immortal race of God, ſaid he to that aſſembly of ſages, and he has appointed a day to judge the univerſe. By that, the Apoſtles ſpread the firſt principles of the doctrine of ſalvation, through infidel and corrupted nations. But we, who come after the revolution of ages, when the plenitude of nations has entered into the Church, when the whole univerſe has profeſſed to believe, when all the myſteries have been

been cleared up, all the prophecies accompliſhed, Jeſus Chriſt glorified, the path of heaven laid open; we who appear in theſe latter times, when the day of the Lord is ſo much nearer than when our fathers believed; Alas! what ought our miniſtry to be, unleſs to diſpoſe believers for that grand hope, and to inſtruct them to hold themſelves in readineſs to appear before Jeſus Chriſt, who will quickly come: far from having ſtill to combat theſe ſhocking and fooliſh maxims, which the firſt preaching of the goſpel had effaced from the univerſe.

The pretended uncertainty of a future ſtate, is, then, the grand foundation of the ſecurity of unbelievers. We know nothing, ſay they, of that other world, of which you tell us ſo much. None of the dead have ever returned to inform us; perhaps, there is nothing beyond the grave: Let us enjoy, therefore, the preſent, and leave to chance a futurity, which either exiſts not, or is meant to be concealed from our knowledge.

Now, I ſay, that this uncertainty is ſuſpicious in the principle which produces it, fooliſh in the proofs on which it depends, and frightful in its conſequences. Refuſe me not here your attention.

Suſpicious in the principle which produces it. For, how has the uncertainty of a future ſtate been formed in the mind of the unbeliever? It requires only to trace the origin of an opinion, to know whether the intereſts of truth, or the paſſions, have eſtabliſhed it on earth.

At his birth, the impious man bore the principles of natural religion, common to all men: He found written in his heart, a law, which forbade violence, injuſtice, treachery,

chery, and every action to another, which he would not have done to himself: Education fortified these sentiments of nature: He was taught to know a God; to love and to fear him: Virtue was shewn to him in the rules; it was rendered amiable to him in the examples; and though, within himself, he felt inclinations, in opposition to duty, yet, when he yielded to their seductions, his heart secretly espoused the cause of virtue against his own weakness.

Thus did the impious man, at first, live on the earth: With the rest of mankind, he adored a Supreme Being; respected his laws; dreaded his chastisements; and expected his promises. Whence comes it, then, that he no longer acknowledges a God; that crimes appear to him as human policies: hell, a vulgar prejudice; a future state, a chimera; and the soul, a spark, which is extinguished with the body? By what exertion has he attained to the knowledge of things so new, and so surprising? By what means has he succeeded, to rid himself of these ancient prejudices, so rooted among men, so consistent with the feelings of his heart, and the lights of reason? Has he searched into, and maturely examined them? Has he adopted every solid precaution, which an affair the most important of life, requires? Has he withdrawn himself from the commerce of men, in solitude, to allow leisure for reflection and study? Has he purified his heart, lest the passions may have misled him? What anxious attentions, and solicitude, to investigate the truth, are required, to reject the first feelings which the soul has imbibed!

Listen, my brethren, and adore the justice of God, on these corrupted hearts, whom he delivers up to the vanity of their own judgment. In proportion as his manners became dissolute, the rules have appeared suspicious; in proportion

proportion as he became debaſed, he has endeavoured to perſuade himſelf, that man is like the beaſt. He is become impious, only by ſhutting up every avenue which might lead him to the truth; by no longer regarding religion as an important concern; by ſearching into it, only for the purpoſe of diſhonouring it, by blaſphemies and ſacrilegious witticiſms; he is become impious, only by ſeeking to ſteel himſelf againſt the cries of his own conſcience, and delivering himſelf up to the moſt infamous gratifications. It is by that path, that he has attained to the wonderful and ſublime ſcience of unbelief: It is to theſe grand efforts, that he owes the diſcovery of a truth, of which the reſt of men before him, had either been ignorant, or deteſted.

Behold the ſource of unbelief; the corruption of the heart. Yes, my brethren, find me, if you can, men wiſe temperate, pure, regular, and lovers of truth, who believe not a God, who look forward to no future ſtate, who look upon adulteries, abominations, and inceſts, as the inclinations and innocent paſtimes of nature. If the world has ſeen impious characters, who bore the ſemblance of wiſdom and temperance, it was either that they better concealed their irregularities, in order to give more credit to their impiety, or the ſatiety of pleaſures, which had brought them to that feigned temperance: Debauchery had been the original ſource of their irreligion; their hearts were corrupted, before their faith was wrecked; they had an intereſt to believe that all dies with the body, before they ſucceeded in perſuading themſelves of it; and a long indulgence of luxury, had fully diſguſted them with guilt, but had not rendered virtue more amiable to them,

What conſolation for us, who believe, that we muſt firſt renounce probity, modeſty, manners, and all the feelings of

of humanity, before we can renounce faith, and to be no longer Chriſtian, muſt firſt ceaſe to be man!

Behold then, the uncertainty of the impious, already ſuſpicious in its principle; but ſecondly, it is fooliſh in the proofs on which it depends.

For ſurely, very deciſive and convincing proofs muſt be required to make us eſpouſe the cauſe of unbelief, and to render us tranquil, on what we are told of an eternal ſtate to come. It is not natural, that man would hazard an intereſt ſo ſerious as that of eternity, on light and frivolous proofs, ſtill leſs ſo, that he would thereon abandon the general opinion, the belief of his fathers, the religion of all ages, the agreement of all nations, and the prejudices of his education, had he not, as it were, been forced to it, by the evidence of the truth. Unleſs abſolutely convinced that all dies with the body, nothing can bear a compariſon with the madneſs and folly of the unbeliever. Now, is he completely convinced? What are the grand reaſons which have determined him to adopt this vile cauſe? We know not, ſays he, what happens in that other world of which you tell us; the good die equally as the wicked: man as the beaſt; and no one returns, to ſay which was in the error. Preſs him a little further, and you will be ſhocked to ſee the weakneſs of unbelief; vague diſcourſes, hackneyed ſuſpicions, everlaſting uncertainties, and chimerical ſuppoſitions, on which nobody in their ſenſes, would wiſh to riſk the happineſs, or diſquiet of a ſingle day, and upon which he, however, hazards an eternity.

Behold the inſurmountable proofs which the freethinker oppoſes to the belief of the univerſe; behold that evidence, which, in his mind, prevails over all that is moſt clear, and

and moſt eſtabliſhed on the earth. We know nothing of what paſſes in that other world of which you tell us. O man! open here thine eyes. A ſingle doubt is ſufficient to render thee impious, and all the proofs of religion are too weak to make thee a believer. Thy mind heſitates to believe in a future ſtate, and, in the mean time, thou liveſt as though there were none. The only foundation thou haſt, for thine opinion, is thine uncertainty, and thou reproacheſt to us, that faith is a vulgar credulity!

But I aſk, on which ſide here is credulity? Is it on that of the freethinker, or the believer? The latter believes in a future ſtate, on the authority of the divine writings, that is to ſay, the book, without contradiction, which moſt deſerves belief; on the depoſition of holy men, thatis to ſay, juſt, pure, and miraculous characters, who have ſhed their blood to render glory to the truth, and to that doctrine, of which the converſion of the univerſe has rendered a teſtimony, that to the end of ages, ſhall riſe up againſt the impious; on the accompliſhment of the prophecies, that is to ſay, the only character of truth, which the impoſtor cannot imitate; on the tradition of all ages, that is to ſay, on facts, which, ſince the creation of the world, have appeared certain, to all the greateſt characters, the moſt acknowledged juſt men, the wiſeſt and moſt civilized nations, the univerſe could ever boaſt of; in a word, on proofs at leaſt probable. The freethinker denies a futurity on a ſimple doubt, a mere ſuſpicion. Who knows it ſays he; who has returned from it? He has no argument, either ſolid or deciſive, to overturn the truth of a future ſtate. For let him avow it, and then will we ſubmit. He only miſtruſts that there be any thing after this life, and upon that he believes that all dies with him.

Now

Now I demand, which here is the credulous? Is it he, who, in ſupport of his belief, has whatever is probable among men, and moſt calculated to make impreſſion on reaſon; or him who is reſolved to deny a future ſtate, on the weakneſs of a ſimple doubt? Nevertheleſs, the free-thinker imagines that he exerts his reaſon more than the believer; he looks down upon us, as weak and credulous men; and he conſiders himſelf as a ſuperior genius, exalted above all vulgar prejudices, and whom reaſon alone, and not the public opinion, determines. O God! How terrible art thou, when thou deliverest up a ſinner to his own infatuation; and how well thou knoweſt to draw glory to thyſelf, even from the efforts which thine enemies make to oppoſe it.

But I go ſtill further. When, even in the doubt, formed by the unbeliever, of a future ſtate, the arguments ſhould be equal, and the trifling uncertainties, which render him incredulous, ſhould balance the ſolid and evident truths which promiſe immortality to us; I ſay, that even in an equality of proofs, he at leaſt ought to wiſh, that the opinion of faith, with regard to the nature of our ſoul, were true; an opinion which is ſo honourable to man; which tells him, that his origin is celeſtial, and his hopes eternal; he ought to wiſh, that the doctrine of impiety were falſe; a doctrine ſo melancholy, ſo humiliating to man; which confounds him with the beaſt; which makes him live only for the body; give him neither purpoſe, deſtination, nor hope; and limits his lot to a ſmall number of rapid, reſtleſs, and ſorrowful days, which he paſſes on the earth: All things equal, a reaſon born with any degree of elevation, would prefer being deceived by what is honourable to itſelf, rather than adopt a ſide ſo diſgraceful to its being. What a ſoul, then, muſt the unbeliever have received from nature, to

prefer, in ſo great an inequality of proofs, the belief, that he is created only for this earth, and favourable to regard himſelf as a vile aſſemblage of dirt, and the companion of the ox and bull! What do I ſay? What a monſter in the univerſe muſt be the unbeliever, who miſtruſts the general belief, only becauſe it is too glorious for his nature; and believes, that the vanity of men has alone introduced it on the earth, and has perſuaded them that they are immortal.

But no, my brethren! Theſe men of fleſh and blood, with reaſon, reject the honour which religion does to their nature, and perſuade themſelves, that their ſoul is merely of earth, and that all dies with the body. Senſual, diſſolute, and effeminate men, who have no other check than a brutal inſtinct; no other rule, than the vehemence of their deſires; no other occupation, than to awaken, by new artifices, the cupidity already ſatiated; men of that character can have little difficulty to believe, that no principle of ſpiritual life exiſts within them; that the body is their only being; and, as they imitate the manners of beaſts, they are pardonable in attributing to themſelves the ſame nature. But let them not judge of all men by themſelves; there are ſtill on the earth, chaſte, pure, and temperate ſouls; let them not aſcribe to nature, the ſhameful tendencies of their own mind; let them not degrade humanity in general, becauſe they have unworthily debaſed themſelves; let them ſeek out among men, ſuch as themſelves; and finding that they are almoſt ſingle in the univerſe, they ſhall then ſee that they are rather monſters, than the ordinary productions of nature.

Beſides, not only is the freethinker fooliſh, becauſe, that even in an equality of proofs, his heart and glory ſhould decide him in favour of faith, but likewiſe his own

intereſt: For, as I have already ſaid, What does he riſk by believing? What diſagreeable conſequence will follow his miſtake? He will live with honour, probity, and innocence; he will be mild affable, juſt, ſincere, religious, a generous friend, a faithful huſband, and an equitable maſter; he will moderate his paſſions, which would otherwiſe have occaſioned all the misfortunes of his life; he will abſtain from pleaſures and exceſſes, which would have prepared for him a painful and premature old age, or a deranged fortune; he will enjoy the character of a virtuous man, and the eſteem of mankind:—Behold what he *riſks*. When all ſhould even finiſh with this life, that ſurely is ſtill the way to paſs it with happineſs and tranquillity; ſuch is the only inconveniency I can find. If no eternal recompenſe ſhall follow, what will he have loſt by expecting it? He has loſt ſome ſenſual and momentary gratifications which would ſoon have either fatigued him by the diſguſt which always follows their enjoyment, or tyranniſed over him, by the new deſires they light up: He has loſt the wretched ſatisfaction of being, for the inſtant he appeared on the earth, cruel, unnatural, voluptuous, without faith, morals, or conſtancy, perhaps deſpiſed and diſgraced in the midſt of his own people. I can ſee no other misfortune; he ſinks back to his original non-exiſtence, and his error has no other conſequence.

But if there is a future ſtate; ſhould he deceive himſelf in rejecting faith, what does he not riſk? The loſs of eternal riches; the poſſeſſion of thy glory, O my God! which would for ever have rendered him happy. But even that is only the commencement of his miſery; he goes to experience puniſhment without end or meaſure, an eternity of horror and wrath. Now, compare theſe two deſtinies: What party here will the freethinker adopt? Will he riſk the

the ſhort duration of his days, or a whole eternity? Will he hold by the preſent, which muſt finiſh to-morrow, and in which he even cannot be happy? Will he tremble at a futurity, which has no other limits than eternity, and can never finiſh but with God himſelf! Where is the prudent man, who, in an uncertainty even equal, durſt here balance? And what name ſhall we give to the unbeliever, who, with nothing in his favour but frivolous doubts, while on the ſide of truth, beholding the authority, example, preſcription, proof, and voice of all ages, the entire world, ſingly adopts the wretched cauſe of unbelief; dies tranquil, as though he were no longer to have exiſtence; leaves his eternal deſtiny in the hands of chance, and careleſsly prepares to encounter ſo awful a ſcene. O God! Is this a man conducted by cool reaſon; or, is it a madman, who looks forward to no reſource but deſpair? The uncertainty of the freethinker is therefore fooliſh, in the proofs on which he depends.

But laſtly, it is ſtill more dreadful in its conſequences. And here, my brethren, allow me to lay aſide the deep reaſonings of erudition and doctrine; I wiſh to ſpeak only to the conſcience of the unbeliever, and to confine myſelf to the proofs which his own feelings acknowledge.

Now, if all ſhall finiſh with us, if man have nothing to expect after this life, and that here is our country, our origin, and the only happineſs we can promiſe ourſelves, why are we not happy? If only created for the pleaſures of the ſenſes, why are they unable to ſatisfy us; and why do they always leave a fund of wearineſs and ſorrow in the heart? If man have nothing ſuperior to the beaſt, why, like it, do not his days flow on without care, uneaſineſs, diſguſt, or ſorrow, in ſenſual and carnal enjoyments? If man have no other

other felicity to expect, than merely a temporal happineſs, why is he unable to find it on the earth? Whence comes it, that riches ſerve only to render him uneaſy; that honours fatigue him; that pleaſures exhauſt him; that the ſciences, far from ſatisfying, confound and irritate his curioſity; that reputation conſtrains and embarraſſes him; that all theſe, united, cannot fill the immenſity of his heart, and ſtill leave him ſomething to wiſh for? All other beings, contented with their lot, appear happy in their way, in the ſituation the Author of Nature has placed them; the ſtars, tranquil in the firmament, quit not their ſtation to illuminate another world; the earth, regular in its movements, ſhoots not upwards to occupy their place; the animals crawl in the fields, without envying the lot of man, who inhabits cities and ſumptuous palaces; the birds carol in the air, without troubling themſelves, whether there be happier creatures in the earth than themſelves; all are happy as I may ſay; every thing in nature is in its place: Man alone is uneaſy and diſcontented; man alone is a prey to his deſires, allows himſelf to be torn by fears, finds his puniſhment in his hopes, and becomes gloomy and unhappy in the midſt even of his pleaſures: Man alone can meet with nothing here to fix his heart.

Whence comes this, O man? Muſt it not be, that here thou art not in thy place; that thou art made for heaven; that thy heart is greater than the world; that the earth is not thy country; and that whatever is not God, is nothing to thee? Anſwer, if thou can, or rather queſtion thy heart, and thou wilt believe.

adly, If all die with the body, who has been able to perſuade all men, of every age, and of every country, that their ſoul was immortal? From whence has this ſtrange idea of immortality

immortality deſcended to the human race? How could an opinion, ſo diſtant from the nature of man, were he born only for the functions of the ſenſes, have pervaded the earth: For if man, like the beaſt, be created only for the preſent, nothing ought to be more incomprehenſible to him, than even the idea of immortality. Could machines of clay, whoſe only object ſhould be a ſenſual happineſs, have ever been able to form, or to find in themſelves, an opinion ſo exalted, an idea ſo ſublime? Nevertheleſs, this opinion, ſo extraordinary, is become that of all men; this opinion, ſo oppoſite even to the ſenſes, ſince man, like the beaſt, dies wholly, in our ſight, is eſtabliſhed on the earth; this opinion, which ought not to have even found an inventor in the univerſe, has been received with an univerſal docility of belief, amongſt all nations; the moſt ſavage, as the moſt cultivated; the moſt poliſhed, as the moſt brutal; the moſt incredulous, as the moſt ſubmiſſive to faith.

For, go back to the beginning of ages, examine all nations, read the hiſtory of kingdoms and empires, liſten to thoſe who return from the moſt diſtant iſles; the immortality of the ſoul has always been, and ſtill is, the belief of every people on the face of the earth. The knowledge of one God may have been obliterated; his glory, power, and immenſity, may have been effaced, as I may ſay, from the hearts and minds of men; obſtinate and ſavage nations may ſtill live without worſhip, religion, or God, in this world; but they all look forward to a future ſtate; nothing has ever been able to eradicate the opinion of the immortality of the ſoul; they all figure to themſelves a region, which our ſouls ſhall inhabit after death; and in forgetting God, they have never diſcarded the idea of that proviſion for themſelves.

Now,

blackeſt villainies, paſtimes of nature, and names which the policy of legiſlators has invented.

Behold, to what the ſublime philoſophy of the freethinker amounts; behold, that force of argument, that reaſon, and that wiſdom, which they are continually vaunting to us. Agree to their maxims, and the entire univerſe ſinks back to a frightful chaos; all is overturned on the earth; all ideas of virtue and vice are reverſed, and the moſt inviolable laws of ſociety vaniſh; the inſtitution of morals periſhes; the government of ſtates and empires is without direction; all harmony in the body-politic, falls. The human ſpecies is only an aſſemblage of fools, barbarians, voluptuaries, madmen, and villains, who own no law but force; no other check than their paſſions, and the terror of authority; no other bond than impiety and independence; and no other God than themſelves. Behold the world of the freethinker; and if this hideous plan of a republic pleaſes you, conſtitute, if you can, a ſociety of theſe monſters. The only thing which remains for us to ſay, is, that you are fully qualified to occupy a place in it.

How worthy then, of man, to look forward to an eternal deſtiny; to regulate his manners by the law; and to live, as having one day to render account of his actions before Him, who ſhall weigh us all in the balance!

The uncertainty of the believer is then ſuſpicious in its principle, fooliſh in its proofs, and horrible in its conſequences. But after having ſhewn you, that nothing can be more repugnant to ſound reaſon, than the doubt which he entertains of a future ſtate, let us completely confound his pretexts, and prove, that nothing is more oppoſite to the con-

idea of a wiſe God, and to the opinion of his own conſcience.

PART II. It is no doubt aſtoniſhing, that the freethinker ſhould ſeek, even in the greatneſs of God, a ſhelter to his crimes; and that, finding nothing within himſelf to juſtify the horrors of his ſoul, he can expect to find, in the awful Majeſty of the Supreme Being, an indulgence, which he cannot find even in the corruption of his own heart.

Indeed, ſays the unbeliever, Is it worthy the greatneſs of God, to pay attention to what paſſes among men; to calculate their virtues or vices; to ſtudy even their thoughts, and their trifling and endleſs deſires? Men, worms of the earth, who ſink into nothing before the Majeſty of his looks, are they worthy his attentive inſpection? And is it not degrading a God, whom we are taught to believe ſo great, to give to him an employment, by which even man would be diſhonoured?

But, before I make you ſenſible of the whole abſurdity of this blaſphemy, I beg you will obſerve, that it is the freethinker himſelf who thus degrades the Majeſty of God, and brings him to a level with man. For, has the Almighty occaſion narrowly to obſerve men, in order to know every thought and deed? Are cares and attentions neceſſary for Him, to ſee what paſſes on the earth? Is it not in Him, that we are, that we live, that we act? And can we ſhun his looks, or can he even avert them from our crimes? What folly, then, in the freethinker, to ſuppoſe, that it requires care and obſervation from the Divinity, if he wiſhes to remark what paſſes on the earth! His only employment is to know and enjoy himſelf.

This reflection admitted: I anſwer, in the firſt place, If it become the greatneſs of God to leave good and evil without puniſhment or reward, it is then equally indifferent, whether we be juſt, ſincere, friendly and charitable, or cruel, deceitful, perfidious and unnatural: God conſequently does not love virtue, modeſty, rectitude, religion, more than debauchery, perjury, impiety, and villainy; ſince the juſt and the impious, the pure and the impure, ſhall experience the ſame lot, and an eternal annihilation equally awaits them all in the grave.

What do I ſay? God even ſeems to declare in favour of the impious here againſt the juſt. He exalts him like the cedar of Lebanon; loads him with riches and honours; gratifies his deſires, and aſſiſts his projects; for the impious are in general the proſperous on the earth. On the contrary, He ſeems to neglect the upright man; He humbles, afflicts, and delivers him up to the falſity and power of his enemies; for diſgrace and affliction are the common portion of the good below. What a monſter of a Supreme Being, if all muſt finiſh with man, and if neither miſeries nor rewards, except thoſe in this life, are to be expected! Is He, then, the protector of adulteries, profanations and the moſt ſhocking crimes, the perſecutor of innocence, modeſty, piety, and all the pureſt virtues? Are his favours the price of guilt, and his puniſhments the recompenſe of virtue? What a God of darkneſs, imbecility, confuſion, and iniquity, does the freethinker form to himſelf!

What, my brethren! It would become His greatneſs to leave the world he has created, in a general confuſion; to ſee the wicked almoſt always prevail over the upright; the innocent cruſhed by the uſurper; the father, the victim of an ambitious and unnatural ſon? From the height of his greatneſs,

greatneſs, God would amuſe himſelf with theſe horrible tranſactions, without any intereſt in their commiſſion? Becauſe He is great, he ſhould be either weak, unjuſt, or cruel? Becauſe men are inſignificant, they ſhould have the privilege of being diſſolute without guilt, or virtuous without merit?

O God! If ſuch be the character of thy Supreme Being: If it be Thee whom we adore, under ſuch ſhocking ideas, I know Thee no more, then, as my heavenly Father, my protector, the conſoler of my ſufferings, the ſupport of my weakneſs, and the rewarder of my fidelity? Thou art then only an indolent and capricious tyrant, who ſacrificeſt all men to thy vain pride, and haſt drawn them from nothing, only to ſerve as the ſport of thy leiſure or caprice!

For, laſtly, If there be no future ſtate, what deſign worthy of his wiſdom, could God have propoſed, in creating man? What, in forming them, He had no other view, than in forming the beaſt? Man, that being ſo noble, who is capable of ſuch ſublime thoughts, ſuch vaſt deſires, and ſuch grand ſentiments; ſuſceptible of love, truth, and juſtice: Man, of all creatures, alone worthy of a great deſtination, that of knowing and loving the Author of his being; that man ſhould be made only for the earth, to paſs a ſmall portion of days, like the beaſt, in trifling employments, or ſenſual gratifications; he ſhould fulfil his purpoſe, by acting ſo riſible and ſo pitiable a part; and afterwards, ſhould ſink back to non-entity, without any other uſe having been made of that vaſt mind, and elevated heart, which the Author of his being had given him? O God! where would here be thy wiſdom, to have made ſo grand a work, for the duration only of a moment; to have exhibited men upon the earth, only as the playful eſſays of thy power;

power; or to amuſe thy leiſure, by a variety of ſhews! The Deity of the freethinker, is not grand, therefore, but becauſe he is more unjuſt, capricious, and deſpicable than men? Purſue theſe reflections, and ſupport, if you can, all the extravagance of their folly.

How, worthy, then, of God, my brethren, to watch over the univerſe; to conduct man, whom he has created, by the laws of juſtice, truth, charity, and innocence; to make virtue and reaſon the bond of union, and the foundation of human ſociety! How worthy of God, to love in his creatures, thoſe virtues which render himſelf amiable; to hate the vices, which diſfigure in them his image; not to confound for ever, the juſt with the impious; to render happy, with himſelf, thoſe ſouls, who have lived only for him; and to deliver up to their own miſery, thoſe who believed they had found a happineſs independent of him!

Behold the God of the Chriſtians; behold, that wiſe, juſt, and Holy Deity, whom we adore; and the advantage we have over the freethinker is, that ours is the God of an innocent and pure heart; the God, whom all creatures manifeſt to us; whom all ages have invoked; whom the ſages, even of Paganiſm, have acknowledged; and of whom, nature has deeply engraven the idea on the very foundation of our being!

But, ſince God is ſo juſt, ought he to puniſh as crimes, inclinations for pleaſure, born with us; nay, which he alone has given us? Laſt blaſphemy of impiety, and laſt part of this Diſcourſe: I ſhall abridge it, and conclude.

But, in the firſt place, Be whom you may, who hold this abſurd language, if you pretend to juſtify all your actions,

tions, by the inclinations which induce you to them; if, whatever we wiſh, become legitimate; if our deſires ought to be the only regulation of our duties; on that principle, you have only to regard with an envious eye, the fortune of your brother, to acquire a right to deſpoil him of it; his wife, with a corrupted heart, to be authoriſed to violate the ſanctity of the nuptial bed, in oppoſition to the moſt ſacred rights of ſociety and nature. You have only to ſuſpect, or diſlike an opponent, to become entitled to deſtroy him; to bear, with impatience, the authority of a father, or the ſeverity of a maſter; to imbrue your hands in their blood: In a word, you have only to bear within you the impreſſions of every vice, to be permitted the gratification of all; and as each finds the fatal ſeeds in himſelf, none would be exempted from this horrible privilege. It is neceſſary, therefore, that man conduct himſelf by other laws than his inclinations, and another rule than his deſires.

Even the Pagan ages acknowledged the neceſſity of a philoſophy, that is to ſay, of a light ſuperior to the ſenſes, which regulated their practice, and make reaſon a check to the human paſſions.

Nature alone led them to this truth; and taught them, that blind inſtinct ought not to be the ſole guide of the actions of men: This inſtinct, therefore, either is not the original inſtitution of nature, or it muſt be a corruption of it; ſince all the laws, ever framed on the earth, have avowedly been made to reſtrain it; that all thoſe, who, in every age, have borne the character of wiſe and virtuous, have rejected its impreſſions; that, amongſt all nations, thoſe infamous individuals, who yielded themſelves up, without reſerve or ſhame, to brutal ſenſuality, have been always

always conſidered as monſters, and the diſgrace of humanity; and the maxim once eſtabliſhed, that our inclinations and deſires cannot be conſidered as crimes, ſociety can no longer exiſt; men muſt ſeparate to be in ſafety, muſt bury themſelves in the foreſts, and live ſolitary like the beaſts.

Beſides, let us render juſtice to men, or rather to the Author, who has formed us. If we find within us inclinations to vice and voluptuouſneſs, do we not alſo find ſentiments of virtue, modeſty, and innocence. If the law of the members drag us towards the pleaſures of the ſenſes, do we not alſo bear, written in our hearts, another law, which recals us to chaſtity and temperance? Now, betwixt theſe two tendencies, why does the freethinker decide, that the inclination which impels us towards the ſenſes is moſt conformable to the nature of man? Is it, from being the moſt violent? But its violence alone is a proof of its diſorder; and whatever comes from nature ought to be more moderate. Is it, from being the ſtrongeſt? But there are juſt and believing ſouls, in whom it is always ſubject to reaſon. Is it, from being more agreeable? But a ſure proof, that this pleaſure is not made to render man happy, is, that diſguſt immediately follows it; and likewiſe, that to the good, virtue has a thouſand times more charms than vice. Laſtly, is it, from being more worthy of man? You dare not ſay ſo, ſince it is through it that he confounds himſelf with the beaſt. Why then do you decide in favour of the ſenſes, againſt reaſon; and inſiſt, that it is more conformable to man, to live like the beaſt, than to be a reaſonable being?

Laſtly, were all men corrupted; and, like the animals not gifted with reaſon, did they blindly yield themſelves up to their brutal inſtinct, and to the empire of the ſenſes and paſſions; you then, perhaps, might have reaſon to

ſay,

ſay, that theſe are inclinations inſeparable from nature, and, in example, find a ſort of excuſe for your exceſſes. But look around you: Do you no longer find any upright characters on the earth? There is no queſtion here of thoſe vain diſcourſes you ſo frequently hold againſt piety, and of which you feel yourſelves the injuſtice: Speak candidly, and render glory to the truth. Are there no longer chaſte, faithful, and righteous ſouls, who live in the fear of the Lord, and in the obſervance of his holy law?

Whence comes it, then, that you have not the ſame empire over your paſſions enjoyed by theſe juſt men? Have they not inherited from Nature the ſame inclinations? Do the objects of the paſſions not awaken, in their hearts, the ſame ſenſations as in yours? Do they not bear within them the ſources of the ſame troubles? What have the juſt, ſuperior to you, but that command over themſelves, and fidelity, of which you are deſtitute?

O man! Thou imputeſt to God a weakneſs, which is the work of thine own diſorders! Thou accuſeſt the Author of Nature of the irregularities of thy will; it is not enough to offend him, thou wiſheſt to make him reſponſible for thy deeds; and pretendeſt, that the fruit of thy crimes becomes the title of thine innocence! With what chimeras is a corrupted heart not capable of feeding its deluſion, in order to juſtify to itſelf the ſhame and infamy of its vices!

God is then juſt, my brethren, when he puniſheth the tranſgreſſions of his law. And let not the freethinker here ſay to himſelf, that the recompenſe of the juſt ſhall then be reſurrection to eternal life; and the puniſhment of the ſinner, the everlaſting annihilation of his ſoul: for behold the laſt reſource of impiety.

But

But, what punishment would it be to the freethinker to exist no more? He wishes that annihilation; he looks forward to it, as his sweetest hope: Amidst his pleasures, he lives tranquil, only in that expectation. What! The just God would punish a sinner, by according him a destiny to the summit of his wishes. Ah! It is not thus that God punisheth. For, what would the freethinker find so shocking in a return to non-entity? Would it be, in the deprivation of his God? But he loves him not; he knows him not; he desires no communication with him: for his only God is himself. Would it be to exist no more? But what could be more desirable to a monster, who knows, that, beyond the term of his crimes, he cannot live but in sufferance, and in the expiation of the horrors of an infamous life? Would it be, by having for ever lost the worldly pleasures he enjoyed, and the different objects of his passions? But when he exists no more, the love of these must equally be extinguished. A more desirable fate cannot therefore be pointed out to the freethinker. It indeed would be the happy conclusion of all his excesses, horrors, and blasphemies.

No, my brethren! The hopes of the freethinker, but not his crimes, shall perish: his torments shall be as eternal as his debaucheries would have been, had he been master of his own destiny. He would willingly have eternized himself on the earth, in the practice of every sensual vice. Death has bounded his crimes, but has not limited his criminal desires. The just and upright Judge, who fathoms the heart, will therefore proportion the punishment to the guilt.

What are we to conclude from this Discourse? That the freethinker is to be pitied, for grounding the only consola-

tion

almoſt all men are ſurpriſed by death; all ſee it approach, while they believe it yet at a diſtance; all ſay to themſelves, like the fooliſh man in the goſpel, "Why ſhould I be "afraid; I have many years yet to come?" In this manner have you ſeen depart, your relations, friends, and almoſt all thoſe whoſe death you have witneſſed; every inſtance ſurpriſed you; you expected it not ſo ſoon; and you endeavoured to account for it by human reaſons; ſuch as the imprudence of the patient, or the want of proper advice and medicines; but the only and true reaſon is, that the hour of the Lord always takes us by ſurpriſe.

The earth is like a vaſt field of battle, where we are every day engaged with the enemy; you have happily eſcaped to-day; but you have witneſſed the fall of many, who like you, expected to ſurvive; to-morrow you again muſt enter the liſts; and who has told you that fortune, ſo capricious with regard to others, to you alone will continue favourable? And ſince you at laſt muſt periſh there, are you prudent in building a fixed and permanent habitation, on the very ſpot, perhaps, intended for your tomb? Place yourſelves in any poſſible ſituation, there is not a moment but may be your laſt, and has actually been ſo to ſome of your brethren; no brilliant action, but may terminate in the eternal ſhades of the grave; and Herod is ſtruck in the midſt of the ſervile and fooliſh applauſes of his people: No day ſet apart for the ſolemn diſplay of worldly magnificence, but may conclude with your funeral pomp; and Jezebel was precipitated the very day ſhe had choſen to ſhow herſelf in her greateſt pride and oſtentation, from the windows of her palace: No feſtival, but may be the feaſt of death; and Belſhazar expired in the midſt of a ſumptuous banquet. No repoſe, but may conduct you to an everlaſting ſleep: and Holofernes, in the heart of his army,

and conqueror of ſo many kingdoms and provinces, fell under the ſtroke of a ſimple Jewiſh woman: No diſeaſe, but may be the fatal term of your courſe; and every day you ſee the ſlighteſt complaints decieve the opinions of the moſt ſkilful, and the expectations of the patient, and almoſt in an inſtant take the turn of death: In a word, figure yourſelves in any poſſible ſtage or ſtation of life, and with difficulty can you number thoſe who have been ſurpriſed in a ſimilar ſituation; and what right have you to expect, that you alone ſhall be exempted from a lot common to all? You allow, you confeſs this: but theſe confeſſions are merely words of courſe, and are never followed by a ſingle precaution, to ſecure you from the danger.

2dly, Did this uncertainty turn only on the hour, the place, or the manner of your death, it would appear leſs ſhocking: for, after all, ſays a Holy Father, what matters it to a Chriſtian, whether he ſhall expire in the midſt of his connections, or in the country of ſtrangers; in the bed of ſorrow, or the abyſs of the waves; provided he dies in piety and righteouſneſs? But what renders this terrible, is, the uncertainty, whether you ſhall die in the Lord, or in ſin; that you ſhall know not what will be your lot in that other region, where conditions change no more; into whoſe hands, at its departure from the body, your ſoul trembling, a ſtranger and alone, ſhall fall: whether it ſhall be ſurrounded with light, and carried to the foot of the throne on the wings of bleſſed and happy ſpirits, or enveloped in darkneſs, and caſt headlong into the gulf: You hang betwixt theſe two eternities: You know not to which you ſhall be attached: Death alone will diſcloſe the ſecret; and in this uncertainty, you remain tranquil, and indolently wait its approach, as though it were a matter of no importance to you, nor to determine your eternal happineſs

pineſs or miſery? Ah! my brethren, were it even true, that all ends with us, the impious man would ſtill be fooliſh in ſaying, "Let us think not on death; let us eat and "drink, for to-morrow we die:" The more he found life agreeable, the more reaſon would he have to be afraid of death, which to him would however be only a ceſſation of exiſtence. But we, to whom faith opens proſpects of puniſhment, or eternal rewards, beyond the grave; we who muſt reach the gates of death, ſtill uncertain of this dreadful alternative, is there not a folly, What do I ſay? a madneſs (not to be ſure in profeſſing the ſentiments of the impious, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die)," in living as though we thought like him! Is it poſſible we can remain a ſingle inſtant unoccupied with that deciſive moment, and without allaying, by the precautions of faith, that trouble and dread into which this uncertainty muſt caſt a ſoul, who has not yet renounced his eternal hopes?

3dly, In all other uncertainties, the number of thoſe who ſhare the ſame danger, may inſpire us with confidence; or reſources, with which we flatter ourſelves, may leave us more tranquil; or, even at the worſt, the diſappointment becomes a leſſon, which teaches us, to our coſt, to be more guarded in future: But, in the dreadful uncertainty in queſtion, the number of thoſe who run the ſame riſk can diminiſh nothing from our danger; all the reſources with which we may flatter ourſelves on the bed of death, are, in general, merely illuſive; and religion itſelf, which furniſhes them, dare ground but ſmall hopes on them: In a word, the miſtake is irremediable; we die only once, and our paſt folly can no more ſerve as a leſſon to guard us from future error. Our misfortune, indeed, opens our eyes; but theſe new lights, which diſſipate our blindneſs, become uſeleſs, by the immutability of our ſtate, and are rather a cruel

cruel knowledge of our miſery, which prepares to tear us with eternal remorſe, and to occaſion the moſt grievous portion of our puniſhment, than wiſe reflections which may lead us to repentance.

Upon what, then, can you juſtify this profound and incomprehenſible neglect of your laſt day, in which you live? On youth, which may ſeem to promiſe you many years yet to come?

Youth! But the ſon of the widow of Naim was young: Does death reſpect ages or rank? Youth! But that is exactly what makes me tremble for you; licentious manners, pleaſures to exceſs, extravagant paſſions, ambitious deſires, the dangers of war, thirſt for renown, and the ſallies of revenge: Is it not during the purſuit, or gratification of ſome one of theſe paſſions, that the majority of men finiſh their career? Adonias, but for his debaucheries, might have lived to a good old age; Abſalom, but for his ambition; the king of Sachem's ſon, but for his love of Dinah; Jonathan, had glory not dug a grave for him in the mountains of Gilboa. Youth! alas! it is the ſeaſon of dangers, and the rock upon which life generally ſplits.

Once more, then, Upon what do you found your hopes? On the ſtrength of your conſtitution? But what is the beſt eſtabliſhed health? A ſpark which a breath ſhall extinguiſh: A ſingle day's ſickneſs is ſufficient to lay low the moſt robuſt. I examine not after this, whether you do not even flatter yourſelves on this point: If a body, exhauſted by the irregularities of youth, do not announce to your own minds the ſentence of death; if habitual infirmities do not lay open before you the gates of the grave; if diſagreeable indications do not menace you with ſome ſudden accident,

dent. I wiſh you to lengthen out your days even beyond your hopes. Alas! my brethren, can any period appear long which muſt at laſt come to an end? Look back, and ſee where now are your youthful years? What trace of ſolid joy do they leave in your remembrance? Not more than a viſion of the night; you dream that you have lived, and behold all that is left to you of it: All that interval, elapſed from your birth to the preſent day, is like a rapid flaſh, whoſe paſſage the eye, far from dwelling on, can with difficulty ſee: Had you begun to live, even with the world itſelf, the paſt would now appear to you neither longer nor more real; all the ages, elapſed down to the preſent day, you would look upon as fugitive inſtants; all the nations which have appeared and diſappeared on the earth; all the revolutions of empires and kingdoms; all thoſe grand events which embelliſh our hiſtories, to you would be only the different ſcenes of a ſhow, which you had ſeen concluded in a day. Recollect the victories, the captured cities, the glorious treaties, the magnificence, the ſplendid events of the firſt years of this reign; moſt of you have not only witneſſed, but have ſhared in their danger and glory; our annals will convey them down to our lateſt poſterity; but to you, they are already but a dream; but a momentary flaſh which is extinguiſhed, and which every day effaces more and more from your remembrance. What, then, is this ſmall portion you have ſtill to accompliſh? Can you believe that the days to come have more reality than thoſe already paſt? Years appear long, while yet at a diſtance; arrived, they vaniſh, they ſlip from us in an inſtant; and ſcarcely ſhall we have looked around us, when, as if by enchantment, we ſhall find ourſelves at the fatal term, which ſtill appeared ſo diſtant, that we raſhly concluded it would never arrive. View the world, ſuch as you have ſeen it in your youthful days, and ſuch as you now ſee it: New perſonages

ges have mounted the ſtage; the grand parts are filled by new actors; they are new events, new intrigues, new paſſions, new heroes in virtue as well as in vice, which engage the praiſes, deriſions, and cenſures of the public; a new world, without your having perceived it, has inſenſibly riſen on the wrecks of the firſt; every thing paſſes with and like you; a velocity which nothing can ſtop, drags all into the gulf of eternity: Yeſterday our anceſtors cleared the way for us; and to-morrow, we ſhall do the ſame for thoſe who are to follow. Ages ſucceed each other; the appearance of the world inceſſantly changes; the dead and the living continually replace and ſucceed each other: Nothing ſtands ſtill; all changes, all waſtes away, all has an end: God alone remaineth always the ſame: The torrent of ages, which ſweeps away all men, flows before his eyes; and, with indignation, he ſees weak mortals carried down by that rapid courſe, inſult him while paſſing; wiſh, of that tranſitory inſtant, to conſtitute all their happineſs; and at their departure from it, fall into the hands of his vengeance and wrath. Where, ſays the Apoſtle, amongſt us, are now the wiſe? And a man, were he even capable of governing the world, can he merit that name from the moment that he forgets what he is, and what he muſt be?

Nevertheleſs, my brethren, what impreſſion on us does the inſtability of every thing worldly make? The death of our relations, friends, competitors, and maſters? We never think that we are immediately to follow them; we think only of decking ourſelves out in their ſpoils; we think not on the little time they had enjoyed them, but only on the pleaſure they muſt have had in their poſſeſſion: We haſten to profit ourſelves from the wreck of each other: We are like thoſe fooliſh ſoldiers, who, in the heat of battle, when their companions are every moment falling around them, eagerly

eagerly load themſelves with their clothes; and ſcarcely are they put on, when a mortal blow at once deprives them of their abſurd decorations and life. In this manner the ſon decks himſelf with the ſpoils of the father; cloſes his eyes; ſucceeds to his rank, fortune, and dignities; conducts the pomp of his funeral, and leaves it, more occupied with, more affected by the new titles with which he is now inveſted, than inſtructed by the laſt advices of a dying parent; than afflicted for his loſs, or even undeceived with regard to the things of the earth, by a ſight which places before his eyes their inſignificancy, and announces to him the ſame deſtiny ſoon. The death of our companions is not a more uſeful leſſon to us: Such a perſon leaves vacant an office, which we haſten to obtain; another promotes us a ſtep in the ſervice; claims expire with this one, which might have greatly embarraſſed us; that one now leaves us the indiſputed favourite of our ſovereign; another brings us a ſtep nearer to a certain dignity, and opens the road to a rank which his death alone could render attainable; and on theſe occaſions, our ſpirits are invigorated; we adopt new meaſures, and form new projects: and, far from our eyes being opened, by the examples of thoſe whom we ſee diſappear, there iſſue, even from their aſhes, fatal ſparks, which inflame all our deſires and attachments to the world; and death that gloomy picture of our miſery, reanimates more paſſions among men, than even all the illuſions of life. What then can detach us from this wretched world, ſince death itſelf ſeems only to knit more ſtrongly the bonds, and ſtrengthen us in the error which bind us to it?

Here, my brethren, I require nothing from you but reaſon. What are the natural conſequences which good ſenſe alone ought to draw from the uncertainty of death?

1ſt, The hour of death is uncertain: Every year, every day, every moment, may be the laſt of our life; it is abſurd, then, by attaching ourſelves to what muſt paſs away in an inſtant, to ſacrifice the only riches which are eternal; every thing you do for the earth ought therefore to appear as loſt, ſince you have no intereſt there; you can depend on nothing there, and can carry nothing from it; but what you ſhall have done for heaven: The kingdoms of the earth, and all their glory, ought not then for a moment to balance the intereſts of your eternal welfare, ſince the greateſt fortune cannot aſſure you of a day more than the moſt humble; and ſince the only conſequence which can accrue from it, is a more deep and bitter ſorrow on the bed of death, when you ſhall be obliged for ever to part from them; every care, every movement, every deſire, ought therefore to centre in eſtabliſhing for yourſelves a permanent and unchangeable fortune, an eternal happineſs, which fadeth not away.

2dly, The hour of your death is uncertain: You ought then to expect it every day; never to permit yourſelves an action, in which you would wiſh not to be ſurpriſed; to conſider all your proceedings, as thoſe of a dying man, who every moment expects his ſoul to be recalled; to act in every thing, as though you were that inſtant to render account of your conduct; and, ſince you cannot anſwer for the time which is to come, in ſuch a manner to regulate the preſent, that you may have no occaſion for the future to repair its errors.

Laſtly, The hour of your death is uncertain: delay not then, your repentance; time preſſes, haſten then your converſion to the Lord: You cannot aſſure yourſelves of a day, and you defer it to a diſtant and uncertain period to come.

come. Were you unfortunately to ſwallow a mortal poiſon, would you put off to another day, the trial of the only antidote which might ſave your life? Would the agent of death, which you carried in your bowels, allow of delays, and neglect? Such is your ſtate. If you be wiſe, have inſtant recourſe to your precautions: You carry death in your ſoul, ſince in it you carry ſin; haſten to apply the remedy, ſince every moment is precious to him, who cannot depend on one; the poiſonous beverage which infects your ſoul, cannot long be trifled with; the goodneſs of God ſtill holds out to you a cure; haſten, once more I ſay, to ſecure it, while it is not yet too late. Should entreaties be neceſſary to determine your compliance; ought not the proſpect of relief to be ſufficient? Is it neceſſary to exhort an unfortunate wretch, juſt ſinking in the waves, to exert his endeavours to ſave himſelf? Ought you, in this matter, to have occaſion for our miniſtry? Your laſt hour approaches; you ſoon ſhall have to appear before the tribunal of God. You may uſefully employ the moment, which yet remains to you: Almoſt all thoſe, whoſe departure from this world you are daily witneſſing, allow it to ſlip from them, and die without having reaped any advantage from it: You imitate their neglect; the ſame ſurpriſe awaits you, and like them you will be cut off before the work of reformation has commenced. They had been warned of it, and in the ſame manner we warn you; their miſery touches you not; and the unfortunate lot which awaits you, will not more ſenſibly affect thoſe to whom we ſhall one day announce it; it is a ſucceſſion of blindneſs, which paſſes from father to ſon, and is perpetuated on the earth: We all wiſh to live better, and we all die before we have begun to reform.

Such, my brethren, are the prudent and natural reflections which the uncertainty of our laſt hour, ſhould lead us to make. But if, on account of its uncertainty, you are imprudent, in paying no more attention to it, than as if it were never to arrive, the fearful portion attending its certainty ſtill leſs excuſes your folly, in ſtriving to remove that melancholy image from your mind, under the pretence of its only tending to empoiſon every comfort, and to deſtroy the tranquillity of life. This, is what I have ſtill to lay before you.

PART II.—Man loves not to dwell upon his nothingneſs, and meanneſs: whatever recals to him his origin, puts him in mind alſo of his end, wounds his pride, intereſts ſelf-love, attacks the foundation of all his paſſions, and gives birth to gloomy and diſagreeable thoughts. To die; to diſappear from the earth; to enter the dark abyſs of eternity; to become a carcaſs, the food of worms, the horror of men, the hideous inmate of a tomb; that ſight alone, revolts every ſenſe, diſtracts reaſon, blackens imagination, and empoiſons every comfort in life; we dare not fix our looks on ſo hideous an image; we reject that thought, as the moſt gloomy and bitter of all: We dread, we fly from every thing, which may force its remembrance on our mind, as though it would haſten the approach of the fatal hour. Under a pretence of tenderneſs, we love not to hear mention of our departed friends; care is taken to remove our attention, from the places in which they have dwelt, and from every thing which, along with their idea, at the ſame time awakens that of death, which has deprived us of them. We dread all melancholy recitals; in that reſpect, we carry our terrors even to the moſt childiſh ſuperſtition; in every trifle our fancy ſees fatal prognoſtications of death; in the wanderings of a dream, in the nightly ſounds of a bird, in the

the caſual number of a company, and in many other circumſtances ſtill more ridiculous; every where we imagine it before us; and, for that very reaſon, we endeavour to expel it from our thoughts.

Now, my brethren, theſe exceſſive terrors, were pardonable in Pagans, to whom death was the greateſt misfortune, ſeeing they had no expectation beyond the grave; and that, living without hope, they died without conſolation. But that death ſhould be ſo terrible to Chriſtians, is a matter of aſtoniſhment; and that the dread of that image ſhould even ſerve as a pretext to remove its idea from their minds, is ſtill more ſo.

For, in the firſt place, I grant, that you have reaſon to dread that laſt hour; but, as it is certain, I cannot conceive why the terrors of it ſhould prevent your mind from dwelling upon, and endeavouring to anticipate its evils: on the contrary, it ſeems to me, that in proportion as the danger is great to which you are expoſed, you ought more conſtantly to keep it in view, and to uſe every precaution, that it may not take you unawares. What! The more the danger alarms you, the more it ſhould render you indolent and careleſs! The exceſſive and improper terrors of your imagination ſhould cure you, even of that prudent dread, which operates your ſalvation; and becauſe you dread too much, you ſhould abandon every thought of it! But, where is the man, whom a too lively ſenſe of danger renders calm and intrepid? Were it neceſſary to march through a narrow and ſteep defile, ſurrounded on all ſides by precipices, would you order your eyes to be bound, that you might not ſee your danger, and leſt the depth of the gulf below ſhould turn your head? Ah! my dear hearer, you ſee the grave open before you, and that ſpectacle alarms you; but,

in

in place of taking all the precautions, offered to you by religion, to prevent you falling headlong into the gulf, you cover your eyes, that you may not ſee it: You fly to diſſipation, to chaſe its idea from your mind; and like thoſe unfortunate victims of Paganiſm, you run to the ſtake, your eyes covered, crowned with flowers, and ſurrounded by dancing and ſongs of joy, that you may not have leiſure to reflect on the fatal term, to which this pomp conducts, and leaſt you ſhould ſee the altar, that is to ſay, the bed of death, where you are immediately to be ſacrificed.

Beſides, by repelling that thought, could you likewiſe repel death, your terrors would then at leaſt have an excuſe. But think, or think not on it, death always advances; every effort you make, to exclude its remembrance, brings you nearer to it, and, at the appointed hour, it will come. What then do you gain by turning your mind from that thought? Do you leſſen the danger? On the contrary, you augment it, and render a ſurpriſal inevitable. By averting your eyes, do you ſoften the horror of that ſpectacle? Alas! You only multiply its terrors. Were you to familiarize yourſelves more with the thoughts of death, your mind, weak and timid, would inſenſibly accuſtom itſelf to it: You would gradually acquire courage to view it without anguiſh, or at leaſt, with reſignation, on the bed of death; it would no longer be an unuſual and ſtrange ſight. A long anticipated danger aſtoniſhes not: Death is only formidable the firſt time that the imagination dwells upon it; and it is only when not expected, and no proviſion made againſt it, that it is to be dreaded.

But, when that thought ſhould even diſquiet, and fill you with impreſſions of dread and ſorrow, where would be the diſappointment? Are you, upon the earth, to live only

only in an indolent eaſe, and ſolely engroſſed by agreeable and ſmiling objects? We ſhould loſe our reaſon, ſay you, were we to devote our attention to this diſmal ſpectacle, without the relaxation of pleaſures. We ſhould loſe our reaſon! But ſo many faithful ſouls, who in all their actions mingle that thought; who make the remembrance of that laſt hour the check to curb their paſſions, and the moſt powerful inducement to fidelity; ſo many illuſtrious penitents, who have buried themſelves alive in their tombs, that they might never loſe ſight of that object; the holy, who every day ſuffered death, like the Apoſtle, that they might live for ever, have they, in conſequence of it, loſt their reaſon? You ſhould loſe your reaſon! That is to ſay, you would regard the world as an exilement; pleaſures as an intoxication; ſin as the greateſt of evils; places, honours, favour, and fortune, as dreams; and ſalvation as the grand and only object worthy of attention: Is that to loſe our reaſon? Bleſſed folly! And would that you, from this moment, were amongſt the number of theſe fooliſh ſages. You would loſe your reaſon! Yes, that falſe, worldly, proud, carnal, and miſtaken reaſon, which ſeduces you; that corrupted reaſon, which obſcures faith, authoriſes the paſſions, makes us prefer the preſent moment to eternity; takes the ſhadow for the ſubſtance, and leads all men aſtray: Yes, that deplorable reaſon, that vain philoſophy, which looks upon as a weakneſs the dread of a future ſtate, and becauſe it dreads it too much, ſeems, in appearance, or endeavours to force itſelf, not to believe it at all. But that prudent, enlightened, moderate, and Chriſtian reaſon, that wiſdom of the ſerpent, ſo recommended in the goſpel, it is in that remembrance that you would find it: That wiſdom, ſays the Holy Spirit, preferable to all the treaſures and honours of the earth; that wiſdom ſo honourable to man, and which exalts him ſo much above himſelf; that

wiſdom

wiſdom which has formed ſo many Chriſtian heroes, it is the image always preſent of your laſt hour, which will embelliſh your ſoul with it. But that thought, you add, ſhould we take it into our head to enter deeply into, and to dwell continually upon it, would be fit to make us renounce all, and to form the moſt violent and overſtrained reſolutions; that is to ſay, would detach you from the world, your vices, paſſions, the infamy of your exceſſes, and make you lead a chaſte, regular and Chriſtian life, alone worthy of reaſon: Theſe are what the world calls violent and overſtrained reſolutions. But likewiſe, under pretence of ſhunning pretended exceſſes, would you refuſe to adopt the moſt neceſſary reſolutions? Make a beginning at any rate; the firſt tranſports ſoon begin to abate; and it is much more eaſy to moderate the exceſſes of piety, than to animate its coldneſs and indolence. Dread nothing from the exceſſive fervour and tranſports of your zeal; you can never, in that reſpect, go too far. An indolent and ſenſual heart, ſuch as your's, nurſed in pleaſures and effeminacy, and void of all taſte for whatever pertains to the ſervice of God, does not promiſe any very great indiſcretions in the ſteps of a Chriſtian life. You know not yourſelves; you have never experienced what obſtacles all your inclinations will caſt in the way of your ſimpleſt exertions in piety. Take meaſures only againſt coldneſs and diſcouragement, which are the only rock you have to dread. What blindneſs! In the fear of doing too much for God, we do nothing at all: the dread of beſtowing too much attention on our ſalvation, prevents us from labouring towards it; and we loſe ourſelves for ever, leſt we ſhould too ſurely attain ſalvation: We dread chimerical exceſſes of piety, and we are not afraid of a departure from, and an actual contempt of piety itſelf. Does the fear of doing too much for fortune and rank, check your exertions

exertions, or cool the ardour of your ambition? Is it not that very hope which ſupports and animates them? Nothing is too much for the world, but all is exceſs for God: We fear, and we reproach ourſelves, leſt we never do enough for an earthly eſtabliſhment; and we check ourſelves, in the dread of doing too much for an eternal fortune.

But I go further, and ſay, that it is a criminal ingratitude towards God, to reject the thought of death, merely becauſe it diſquiets and alarms you; for that impreſſion of dread and terror, is a ſpecial grace with which you are favoured by God. Alas! How many impious characters exiſt who deſpiſe it, who claim a miſerable merit, in beholding with firmneſs its approach, and who regard it as the annihilation of their being! How many ſages and philoſophers in Chriſtianity, who, without renouncing faith, limit all their reflections, all the ſuperiority of their talents, to the tranquil view of its arrival; and who, during life, exert the powers of their reaſon, only in preparing for that laſt moment, a conſtancy and ſerenity of mind, equally abſurd as the moſt vulgar terrors; a purpoſe the moſt imprudent to which reaſon can be applied. It is, therefore, a ſpecial grace beſtowed on you by God, when he permits that thought to have ſuch an energy and aſcendency in your ſoul; in all probability, it is the way by which he wiſhes to recal you to himſelf: Should you ever quit your erroneous and iniquitous courſes, it will be through its influence: Your ſalvation ſeems to depend on that remedy.

Tremble, my dear hearer, leſt your heart ſhould fortify itſelf againſt theſe ſalutary terrors; leſt God ſhould withdraw from you this mean of ſalvation, and harden you againſt all the terrors of religion. A favour, not only deſpiſed,

piſed, but even regarded as a puniſhment, is ſoon followed with the indignation, or at leaſt the indifference of the benefactor. Should that unfortunately be ever the caſe, then will the image of death leave you all your tranquillity: You will fly to an entertainment, the moment you have quitted the ſolemnity of a funeral; with the ſame eyes will you behold a hideous carcaſs, or the criminal object of your paſſion; then will you be even pleaſed with yourſelf for having ſoared above all theſe vulgar fears, and even applaud yourſelf, for a change ſo terrible towards your ſalvation. Profit then, towards the regulation of your manners by that ſenſibility, while it is yet left to you by God: Let your mind dwell on all the objects proper to recal that image, while yet it has influence to diſturb the falſe peace of your paſſions: Viſit the tomb of your anceſtors, in the preſence of their aſhes, to meditate on the vanity of all earthly things; go and aſk, What now, in theſe dark habitations of death, remains to them of all their pleaſures, dignities, and ſplendour? open yourſelf theſe gloomy dwellings, reflecting on what they had formerly been, in the eyes of men, ſee what they now are; ſpectres, whoſe preſence you with difficulty can ſupport; loathſome maſſes of worms and putrefaction: Such are they in the eyes of men; but what are they in the ſight of God? Deſcend, in idea, into theſe dwellings of horror and infection, and chuſe before hand your own place; figure yourſelf in that laſt hour, extended on the bed of anguiſh, ſtruggling with death, your limbs benumbed, and already ſeized with a mortal coldneſs; your tongue already bound in the chains of death; your eyes fixed, covered with a cloud of confuſion, and before which all things begin to diſappear; your relations and friends around you, offering up ineffectual wiſhes for your recovery, and augmenting your fears and regrets, by the tenderneſs of their ſighs, and the abundance of

their

their tears: Reflect upon that ſight, ſo inſtructive, ſo intereſting; you then, in the diſmal ſtruggles of that laſt combat, proving that you are ſtill in life, only by the convulſions which announce your death; the whole world annihilated to you; deſpoiled for ever of all your dignities and titles; accompanied ſolely by your works, and ready to appear in the preſence of God. This is not a prediction; it is the hiſtory of all thoſe who die every day to your knowledge, and it is the anticipation of your own. Think upon that terrible moment; the day, perhaps, is not far removed, yet however diſtant it may be, you will at laſt reach it, and the interval will ſeem to you only an inſtant; and the only conſolation you then can have, ſhall be, to have made the ſtudy of, and preparation for death, the employment of your life.

Laſtly, As my final argument: trace to their ſource theſe exceſſive terrors, which render the image and thoughts of death ſo terrible, and you will undoubtedly find them originating from the diſorders of a criminal conſcience: It is not death which you dread, it is the juſtice of God which awaits you beyond it, to puniſh the infidelities and crimes of your life: It is, that covered as you are with the moſt ſhameful wounds, which diſfigure in you his image, you are not in a ſtate to preſent yourſelves before him; and that to die in your preſent ſituation, muſt be to periſh for ever. Purify then your conſcience, put an end to, and expiate your criminal paſſions; recal God to your heart; no longer offer to his ſight any thing worthy of his anger or puniſhment; place yourſelves in a ſtate to hope ſomething after death, from his infinite mercy; then ſhall you ſee that laſt moment approach with leſs dread and trembling; and the ſacrifice which you ſhall already have made to God, of the world and your paſſions, will not only ren-

der eaſy, but even ſweet and conſoling, the ſacrifice you will then make to him of your life.

For ſay, What has death ſo fearful to a faithful ſoul? From what does it ſeparate him? From a world which ſhall periſh, and which is the country of the reprobate; from his riches, which torment him, of which the uſe is ſurrounded with dangers, and which he is forbid to uſe in the gratification of the ſenſes; from his relations and friends, whom he precedes only a moment, and who ſhall ſoon follow him; from his body, which hitherto had been either a rock to his innocence, or a perpetual obſtacle to his holy deſires; from his offices and dignities, which, in multiplying his duties, augmented his dangers; laſtly, from life, which to him was only an exilement, and an anxious deſire to be delivered from it. What does death beſtow on him, to compenſate for what it takes away? It beſtows unfading riches, of which none can ever deprive; eternal joys, which he ſhall enjoy without fear or remorſe; the peaceable and certain poſſeſſion of God himſelf, from which he can never be degraded; deliverance from all his paſſions, which had ever been a conſtant ſource of diſquiet and diſtreſs; an unalterable peace, which he could never find on the earth; and laſtly, the ſociety of the juſt and happy, in place of that of ſinners, from whom it ſeparates him. What then, O my God! has the world ſo delightful, to attach a faithful ſoul? To him it is a vale of tears, where dangers are infinite, combats daily, victories rare, and defeats certain; where every gratification muſt be denied to the ſenſes; where all tempts, and all is forbidden to us; where we muſt fly from and dread what moſt pleaſes us; in a word, where if you ſuffer not, if you weep not, if you reſiſt not to the utmoſt extremity, if you combat not without ceaſing, if you hate not yourſelf, you are loſt.

loſt. What then do you find ſo amiable, ſo alluring, ſo capable of attaching a Chriſtian ſoul? and to die, is it not a gain, and a triumph for him?

Beſides, death is the only object he looks forward to; it is the only conſolation which ſupports the fidelity of the juſt. Do they bend under afflictions? They know that their end is near; that the ſhort and fleeting tribulations of this life ſhall ſoon be followed by a load of eternal glory; and in that thought they find an inexhauſtible ſource of patience, fortitude and joy. Do they feel the law of the members warring againſt the law of the ſpirit, and exciting commotions, which bring innocence to the very brink of the precipice? They are not ignorant, that after the diſſolution of the earthly frame, it ſhall be reſtored to them pure and celeſtial; and that delivered from theſe bonds of miſery, they ſhall then reſemble the heavenly ſpirits; and that remembrance ſooths and ſtrengthens them. Do they groan under the weight of the yoke of Jeſus Chriſt; and their faith, more weak, is it on the point of relaxing and ſinking under the rigid duties of the goſpel? Ah! the day of the Lord is nigh; they almoſt touch the bleſſed recompenſe; and the end of their courſe, which they already ſee, animates, and gives them freſh vigor. Hear in what manner the Apoſtle conſoled the firſt Chriſtians: My brethren, ſaid he to them, time is ſhort, the day approaches, the Lord is at the gate, and he will not delay; rejoice then; I again ſay to you, rejoice. Such was the only conſolation of men, perſecuted, inſulted, proſcribed, trampled upon, regarded as the ſcum of the earth, the diſgrace of the Jews, and the ſcoff of the Gentiles. They knew that death would ſoon dry up their tears; that for them, there would then be neither mourning, ſorrow, nor ſufferance; that all would be changed; and that thought ſoftened every pain: Ah! whoſoever

ſoever had told theſe generous juſtifiers of faith, that the Lord would never make them know death, but would leave them to dwell forever on the earth, would have ſhaken their faith, tempted their conſtancy, and, by robbing them of that hope, would have deprived them of every conſolation.

You, my brethren, are no doubt little ſurpriſed at this; becauſe death muſt appear a refuge, to men afflicted and unhappy as they were. You are miſtaken: It was neither their perſecutions nor ſufferings which occaſioned their diſtreſs and ſorrow; theſe were their joy, conſolation, and pride: We glory, ſaid they, in tribulations: it was the ſtate of ſeparation in which they ſtill lived from Jeſus Chriſt; that alone was the ſource of their tears, and what rendered death ſo deſirable.

While we are in the body, ſaid the Apoſtle, we are ſeparated from the Lord; and that ſeparation was a ſtate of anguiſh and ſorrow to theſe faithful Chriſtians: Piety conſiſts in wiſhing for a re-union with Jeſus Chriſt our head; in ſighing for the happy moment which ſhall incorporate us, with the choſen of God, in that myſtical body, which, from the beginning of the world, is forming, of every tongue, every tribe, and every nation; which is the completion of the deſigns of God, and which will glorify him, with Jeſus Chriſt, to all eternity. Here, we are like branches torn from their ſtem; like ſtrangers, wandering in a foreign land; like fettered captives in a priſon, waiting their deliverance; like children, baniſhed for a time from their paternal inheritance and manſion; in a word, like members ſeparated from their body. Since Jeſus Chriſt, our Head, aſcended to Heaven, the earth is no longer the place of our eſtabliſhment; we look forward, in bleſſed expectation, to the coming of the Lord; that

deſire

deſire conſtitutes all our piety and conſolation: And a Chriſtian, not to long for that happy moment, but to dread, and even look upon it as a misfortune, is to fly in the face of Jeſus Chriſt; to renounce all communication with him; to reject the promiſes of faith, and the glorious title of a citizen of Heaven; it is to centre our happineſs on the things of the earth, to doubt a future ſtate, to regard religion as a dream, and to believe that all dies with us.

No, my brethren, death has nothing to a juſt ſoul, but what is pleaſing and deſirable: Arrived at that happy moment, he, without regret, ſees a world periſh, which he had never loved, and which to him had never appeared otherwiſe than a confuſion of vanities: His eyes cloſe with pleaſure on all thoſe vain ſhows which the earth offers, which he had always regarded as the ſplendor of a moment, and whoſe dangerous illuſions he had never ceaſed to dread: He feels, without uneaſineſs, what do I ſay? with ſatisfaction, that mortal body, which had been the ſubject of all his temptations, and the fatal ſource of all his weakneſſes, become clothed with immortality: He regrets nothing on the earth, where he leaves nothing; and from whence his heart flies along with his ſoul: He even complains not, that he is carried off in the middle of his career, and that his days are concluded in the flower of his age: On the contrary, he thanks his deliverer, for having abridged his ſufferings with his years, for having exacted only a portion of his debt, as the price of his eternity, and for having ſpeedily conſummated his ſacrifice, leſt a longer reſidence in a corrupted world ſhould have perverted his heart. His trials, his mortifications, which had coſt ſo much to the weakneſs of the fleſh, are then his ſweeteſt reflections: He ſees that all now vaniſhes, except what he has done for God; that all now abandon him, his riches, relations, friends and

and dignities; his works alone remaining; and he is tranſported with joy, to think that he had never placed his truſt in the favour of princes, in the children of men, in the vain hopes of fortune, in things which muſt ſoon periſh, but in the Lord alone, who remaineth eternally, and in whoſe boſom he goes to experience that peace and tranquillity which mortals cannot beſtow. Thus tranquil on the paſt, deſpiſing the preſent, tranſported to touch at laſt that futurity, the ſole object of his deſires, already ſeeing the boſom of Abraham open to receive him, and the Son of Man ſeated at the right hand of his Father, holding out for him the crown of immortality, he ſleeps in the Lord, he is wafted by bleſſed ſpirits to the habitation of the holy, and returns to the place from whence he originally came.

May you, my brethren, in this manner, ſee your courſe terminated.

SERMON

SERMON X.

ON THE DEATH OF A SINNER, AND THAT OF A RIGHTEOUS CHARACTER.

REV. xiv. 13.

Bleſſed are the dead which die in the Lord.

THERE is ſomething peculiarly ſtriking and incomprehenſible in the human paſſions.

All men wiſh to live; they look upon death as the moſt dreadful of all evils; all their paſſions attach them to life; yet nevertheleſs thoſe very paſſions inceſſantly urge them towards that death, for which they feel ſuch horror; nay, it ſhould even ſeem, that their only purpoſe in life is to accelerate the moment of death.

All men flatter themſelves, that they ſhall die the death of the righteous: They wiſh it; they expect it. Knowing the impoſſibility of remaining for ever upon this earth, they truſt, that before the arrival of their laſt moment, the paſſions which at preſent pollute, and hold them in captivity, ſhall be completely overcome. They figure to themſelves, as horrible, the lot of a ſinner, who expires in his iniquity, and under the wrath of God, yet nevertheleſs they tranquilly prepare for themſelves the ſame deſtiny.

This

This dreadful period of human life, which is death in ſin, ſtrikes and appals them; yet, like fools, they blindly and merrily purſue the road which leads to it. In vain do we announce to them, that in general men die as they have lived: They wiſh to live the life of a ſinner, yet nevertheleſs to die the death of the righteous.

My intention, at preſent, is not to undeceive you with regard to an illuſion ſo common, and ſo ridiculous, (let us reſerve this ſubject for another occaſion); but, ſince the death of the righteous appears ſo earneſtly to be wiſhed for, and that of the ſinner ſo dreadful to you, I mean, by a repreſentation of them both, to excite your deſires for the one, and to awaken your juſt terrors for the other. As you muſt finally quit this world in one of theſe two ſituations, it is proper to familiarize yourſelves with a view of them both, that by placing before your eyes the melancholy ſpectacle of the one, and the ſoothing conſolations of the other, you may be enabled to judge which of the lots awaits you; and, conſequently, to adopt the neceſſary means to ſecure the deciſion in your favour.

In the picture of the expiring ſinner, you will ſee in what the world, with all its glory and pleaſures, terminates; from the recital of the laſt moments of the righteous man, you will learn to what virtue conducts, in ſpite of all its momentary checks and troubles. In the one you will ſee the world from the eyes of a ſinner in the moment of death: And how vain, frivolous, and different from what it ſeems at preſent will it then appear to you! In the other, you will ſee virtue from the eyes of the expiring righteous man: How grand and eſtimable will your heart then acknowledge it to be!

In

In the one, you will comprehend all the miſery of a ſoul, which has lived forgetful of its God. In the other, the happineſs of him who has lived only to pleaſe and to ſerve him. In a word, the picture of the death of the ſinner will make you wiſh to live the life of the righteous; and the image of the death of the juſt will inſpire you with a holy horror at the life of the ſinner.

PART I.—In vain do we repel the image of death; every day brings it nearer. Youth glides away; years hurry on; and, like water, ſays the Scripture, ſpilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again, we rapidly courſe towards the abyſs of eternity, where for ever ſwallowed up, we can never return upon our ſteps, to appear once more upon the earth.

I know that the brevity and uncertainty of life are continual ſubjects of converſation to us. The deaths of our relations, our friends, our companions, frequently ſudden, and always unexpected, furniſh us with a thouſand reflections on the frailty of every thing terreſtrial.

We are inceſſantly repeating, that the world is nothing; that life is but a dream; and that it is a ſtriking folly our intereſting ourſelves ſo deeply for what muſt paſs ſo quickly away. But theſe are merely words; they are not the ſentiments of the heart; they are diſcourſes offered at the ſhrine of cuſtom; and that very cuſtom occaſions their being immediately, and for ever forgot.

Now, my brethren, form to yourſelves a deſtiny on this earth, agreeable to your own wiſhes: Lengthen out in your own minds, your days to a term beyond your moſt ſanguine hopes. I even wiſh you to indulge in the enjoyment of ſo

pleaſing an illuſion: But at laſt, you muſt follow the track which your forefathers have trod: You will at laſt ſee that day arrive, to which no other ſhall ſucceed; and that day will be the day of your eternity: Happy, if you die in the Lord: Miſerable if you depart in ſin. One of theſe lots awaits you: In the final deciſion upon all men, there will be only two ſides, the right and the left; two diviſions, the goats and the ſheep. Allow me then to recal you to the bed of death, and to expoſe to your view the double ſpectacle of this laſt hour, ſo terrible to the ſinner, and ſo conſolatory to the righteous man.

I ſay terrible to the ſinner, who, lulled by vain hopes of a converſion, at laſt reaches this fatal moment; full of deſires, empty of good works; having ever lived a ſtranger to the Lord, and unable now to make any offering to him, but of his crimes, and the anguiſh of ſeeing a period put to thoſe days, which he vainly believed would endure for ever. Now nothing can be more dreadful than the ſituation of this unfortunate wretch, in the laſt moments of his life! Whichever way his mind is employed, whether in recalling the paſt, or conſidering what is acting around him; in a word, whether he penetrates into that awful futurity, upon the brink of which he hangs, or limits his reflections to the preſent moment; theſe objects, the only ones which can occupy his thoughts, or preſent themſelves to his fancy, only open to him the blackeſt proſpects, which overwhelm him with deſpair.

For what can the paſt offer to a ſinner, who extended upon the bed of death, begins now to yield up dependence upon life, and reads, in the countenances of thoſe around him, the dreadful intelligence, that all is over with him? What now does he ſee in that long courſe of days, which he

he has run through upon the earth? Alas! he ſees only vain cares and anxieties; pleaſures which paſſed away before they could be enjoyed, and iniquities which muſt endure for ever.

Vain cares.—His whole life, which now appears to have occupied but a moment, preſents itſelf to him, and in it he views nothing but one continued conſtraint, and an uſeleſs agitation. He recals to his mind all he has ſuffered for a world, which now flies from him; for a fortune, which now vaniſhes; for a vain reputation, which accompanies him not into the preſence of God; for friends, whom he loſes; for maſters, who will ſoon forget him; for a name, which will be written only on the aſhes of his tomb. What regret muſt agitate the mind of this unfortunate wretch, when he ſees that his whole life has been one continued toil, yet that nothing to the purpoſe has been accompliſhed for himſelf! What regret, to have ſo often done violence to his inclinations, without gaining the advance of a ſingle ſtep towards heaven! To have always believed himſelf too feeble for the ſervice of God, and yet to have had the ſtrength and the conſtancy to fall a martyr to vanity, and to a world which is on the eve of periſhing!

Alas! it is then that the ſinner, overwhelmed, terrified at his own blindneſs and miſtake, no longer finding but an empty ſpace in a life which the world had alone engroſſed; perceiving, that, after a long ſucceſſion of years upon the earth, he has not yet begun to live; leaving hiſtory, perhaps, full of his actions, the public monuments loaded with the tranſactions of his life, the world filled with his name, and nothing, alas! which deſerves to be written in the book of eternity, or which may follow him into the preſence of God: Then it is, though too late, that he begins to hold

hold a language to himſelf, which we have frequent opportunities of hearing: "I have lived, then, only for vanity? "Why have I not ſerved my God, as I have ſerved my maſ- "ters? Alas! Were ſo many anxieties, and ſo much trou- "ble, neceſſary to accompliſh my own deſtruction? Why, "at leaſt did I not receive my conſolation in this world? "I ſhould have enjoyed the preſent, that fleeting moment "which paſſes away from me; and I ſhould not then have "loſt all. But my life has been always filled with anxie- "ties, ſubjections, fatigues, and reſtraints; and all theſe in "order to prepare for me everlaſting miſery. What mad- "neſs to have ſuffered more towards my own ruin, than "was required to have accompliſhed my ſalvation; and to "have regarded the upright, as a melancholy and an unſup- "portable one; ſeeing they have done nothing ſo difficult "for God, that I have not performed an hundred-fold for "the world, which is nothing, and from which I have "conſequently nothing to expect."

Yes, my brethren it is in that laſt moment that your whole life will preſent itſelf to your view; but in very different colours from thoſe in which it appears to you to-day. At preſent you count upon ſervices performed for the ſtate; places which you have filled; actions in which you have diſtinguiſhed yourſelves; wounds, which ſtill bear teſtimony to your valour; the number of your campaigns; the ſplendour of your orders; all theſe appear objects of importance and reality to you. The public applauſes which accompany them; the rewards with which they are followed; the fame which publiſhes them; the diſtinctions attached to them; all theſe only recal your paſt days to you, as days full, occupied, marked each by ſome memorable action, and by events worthy of being for ever preſerved to poſterity. You even diſtinguiſh yourſelves,

in

in your own minds, from thoſe indolent characters of your own rank, who have led an obſcure, idle, and uſeleſs life, and diſhonoured their names, by that ſlothful effeminacy, which has kept them always grovelling in the duſt. But on the bed of death, in that laſt moment, when the world flies off, and eternity approaches, your eyes will be opened; the ſcene will be changed; the illuſion, which at preſent magnifies theſe objects, will be diſſipated. You will ſee things as they really are; and that which formerly appeared ſo grand, ſo illuſtrious, as it was done only for the ſake of the world, of glory, of fortune, will no longer appear of the leaſt importance to you.

You will no longer find any thing real in your life, but what you ſhall have done for God; nothing praiſeworthy, but works of faith and of piety; nothing great, but what will merit eternity; and a ſingle drop of cold water in the name of Jeſus Chriſt, a ſingle tear ſhed in his preſence, and the ſlighteſt mortification ſuffered for his ſake, will all appear more precious, more eſtimable to you, than all the wonders which the world admires, and which ſhall periſh with it.

Not that the dying ſinner finds only cares and anxieties thrown away in his paſt life, he finds the remembrance likewiſe of his pleaſures; but this very remembrance depreſſes and overwhelms him: Pleaſures, which have exiſted only for a moment: He now perceives that he has ſacrificed his ſoul, and his eternal welfare, to a fugitive moment of paſſion and voluptuouſneſs. Alas! life had appeared too long to him, to be entirely conſecrated to God: He was afraid to adopt too early the ſide of virtue, leſt he ſhould be unable to ſupport its duration, its wearineſs, and its conſequences. He looked forward to the years

years he had ſtill to run, as to an immenſe ſpace, through which he muſt travel under the weight of the Croſs, and ſeparated from the world, in the practice of Chriſtian works: This idea alone had always ſuſpended his good intentions; and in order to return to God, he waited the laſt ſtage of life, as the one in which perſeverance is moſt certain. What a ſurpriſe in this laſt hour, to find, that what had to him appeared ſo long, has in reality been but an inſtant; that his infancy and old age ſo nearly touch each other, that they only form, as I may ſay, one day; and that, from his mother's breaſt, he has made but one ſtep towards the grave. Nor is this the bittereſt pang which he experiences in the remembrance of his pleaſures: they have vaniſhed like a dream; but he, who formerly claimed an honour to himſelf from their gratification, is now covered with confuſion and ſhame at their recollection: So many ſhameful exceſſes; ſuch weakneſs and debauchery: He, who piqued himſelf upon reaſon, elevation of mind, and haughtineſs towards man; O my God! he then finds himſelf the weakeſt, the moſt deſpicable of ſinners! Apparently, perhaps, a life of prudence, yet ſunk in all the infamy of the ſenſes, and the puerility of the paſſions! A life of glory in the eyes of men; but in the ſight of God, the moſt ſhameful, the moſt deſerving of contempt and diſgrace! A life, which ſucceſs, perhaps, had continually accompanied; yet, nevertheleſs, in private, the moſt abſurd, the moſt trifling, the moſt deſtitute of reflection and wiſdom!

Pleaſures, in a word, which have been the ſource of all his chagrins; which have empoiſoned every enjoyment of life; which have changed his happieſt days into days of madneſs and lamentation.

Pleaſures,

Pleaſures, for which he has ever paid dear; and of which he has never experienced but the anxieties and the bitterneſs: ſuch are the foundations of this frivolous happineſs. His paſſions alone have rendered life miſerable to him; and the only moments of tranquillity he has enjoyed, in the whole courſe of his life, are thoſe in which his heart has been ſheltered from their influence. The days of my pleaſures are fled, ſays then the ſinner to himſelf, but in a diſpoſition of mind very different from that of Job: "Thoſe days which have occaſioned all the ſorrows of my "life; by which my reſt has been broken, and the calm "ſtillneſs of the night changed into the blackeſt thoughts "and uneaſineſſes. Yet nevertheleſs, Great God! Thou "wilt ſtill puniſh the ſorrows and diſtreſſes of my unfortu-"nate life! All the bitterneſs of my paſſions is marked "againſt me in the book of thy wrath; and thou prepareſt "for me, in addition to gratifications which have always "been the ſource of all my miſeries, a miſery without end, "and boundleſs."

Behold what the expiring ſinner experiences in the remembrance of the paſt: Crimes, which ſhall endure for ever; the weakneſſes of childhood; the diſſipations of youth; the paſſions and the diſorders of a more advanced period; what do I know, perhaps even the ſhameful exceſſes of a licentious old age. Ah! my brethren, whilſt in health, we perceive only the ſurface of our conſcience: We recal only a vague and confuſed remembrance of our life: We ſee only the paſſions which actually enchain us; a complete life, ſpent in the habits of iniquity, appears to us only a ſingle crime. But on the bed of death, the darkneſs ſpread over the conſcience of the ſinner is diſſipated. The more he ſearches into his heart, the more does he diſcover new ſtains; the deeper he enters into that abyſs,

abyſs, the more do new monſters of horror preſent themſelves to his ſight. He is loſt in the chaos, and knows not how to proceed. To enlighten it, an entire new life would be neceſſary: Alas! and time flies; ſcarcely do a few moments now remain to him, and he muſt precipitate a confeſſion, for which the greateſt leiſure would hardly ſuffice, and which can precede but an inſtant the awful judgment of the juſtice of God. Alas! we often complain, during life, of a treacherous memory; that we forget every thing; that the miniſter of God is under the neceſſity of remedying our inattention, and of aſſiſting us to know and to judge of ourſelves. But in that laſt moment, the expiring ſinner ſhall require no aſſiſtance to recal the remembrance of his crimes: The juſtice of God, which had delivered him up, during health to all the profundity of his darkneſs, will then enlighten him in his wrath.

Every thing around his bed of death awakens the remembrance of ſome new crime; ſervants, whom he has ſcandalized by his example; children, whom he has neglected; a wife, whom he has rendered miſerable by unlawful attachment; miniſters of the church, whom he has deſpiſed; riches, which he has abuſed; the luxury which ſurrounds him, for which the poor and his creditors have ſuffered; the pride and magnificence of his edifices, which have been reared up upon the inheritance of the widow and the orphan, or perhaps by the public calamity: every thing, in a word, the heavens and the earth, ſays Job, ſhall reveal his iniquity, and riſe up againſt him; ſhall recal to him the frightful hiſtory of his paſſions, and of his crimes.

Thus, the recollection of the paſt forms one of the moſt dreadful ſituations of the expiring ſinner; becauſe in it he finds

finds nothing but labours loſt; pleaſures, which have been diſſipated the moment almoſt of their exiſtence; and crimes which ſhall endure for ever.

But the ſcenes around him are not leſs gloomy to this unfortunate ſoul: His ſurpriſes, his ſeparations, his changes.

His ſurpriſes.—He had always flattered himſelf, that the hour of the Lord would not ſurpriſe him. Whatever had been ſaid to him on the ſubject from the pulpit, had not prevented him from aſſuring himſelf, that his conſcience ſhould be properly arranged before the arrival of this dreaded moment; he has reached it, however, ſtill loaded with all his crimes, without preparation, without the performance of a ſingle exertion towards appeaſing the wrath of the Almighty; he has reached it, while he leaſt thought of it, and he is now to be judged.

His ſurpriſes.—God ſtrikes him in the zenith of his paſſions; in the time, when the thoughts of death were moſt diſtant from his mind; when he had attained to places he had long ardently ſtruggled for; and when, like the fooliſh man in the goſpel, he had exhorted his ſoul to repoſe itſelf, and to enjoy in peace the fruit of its labours. It is in this moment that the juſtice of God ſurpriſes him; and he ſees life, with every imaginary hope of happineſs, blaſted for ever.

His ſurpriſes.—He is on the brink of the gulf, and the Almighty willeth that no one ſhall dare to inform him of his ſituation. His relations flatter him; his friends leave him undeceived: They already lament him, in ſecret, as dead, yet they continue to ſpeak of his recovery; they deceive him, in order that he may deceive himſelf. The

Scriptures muſt be fulfilled: The ſinner muſt be taken by ſurpriſe in this laſt moment: Thou haſt ſaid it, O my God! and thy words are the words of truth:

His ſurpriſes.—Abandoned by all the ſuccours of art, delivered up alone to anguiſh and diſeaſe, he ſtill cannot perſuade himſelf that death is near: He flatters himſelf—he ſtill hopes: The juſtice of God, it would ſeem, leaves him a remnant of reaſon, for the ſole purpoſe of ſeducing himſelf. From his terrors, his aſtoniſhment, his inquietudes, we ſee clearly that he ſtill comprehends not the neceſſity of death. He torments, he agitates himſelf, as if by theſe means he could eſcape death; but his agitations, are only occaſioned by regret for the loſs of life, and are not the effects of grief, for having wickedly ſpent it. The blinded ſinner muſt be ſo to the end; and his death muſt be ſimilar to his life.

In a word, his ſurpriſes.—He ſees now that the world has all along deceived him; that it has continually led him from illuſion to illuſion, and from hope to hope; that things have never taken place exactly as he had promiſed himſelf; and that he has always been the dupe of his errors. He cannot comprehend how his blindneſs could poſſibly be ſo conſtant; that for ſuch a ſeries of years he could obſtinately continue to make ſuch ſacrifices for a world, for maſters, whoſe only payment has been vain promiſes; and that his entire life has been one continued indifference on the part of the world to him, and an intoxication on his to the world. But what overpowers him is, the impoſſibility of remedying the miſtake; that he can die only once; and that after having badly run his race, he can no more recal the paſt, or, by retracing his ſteps, undertake a new trial. Thou art juſt, O my God! and thou

thou willeſt that the ſinner ſhould in advance pronounce againſt himſelf, in order that he may afterwards be judged from his own mouth.

The ſurpriſes of the dying ſinner are, therefore, overwhelming; but the ſeparations which take place in that moment are not leſs ſo for him. The more he was attached to the world, to life, to all its works, the more does he ſuffer when a ſeparation becomes inevitable: Every tie, which now muſt be broken aſunder, becomes a wound which rankles in his heart: Every ſeparation becomes a new death to his mind.

Separation from the riches which, with ſuch conſtant and laborious attention, he had accumulated, by means, perhaps, repugnant to ſalvation; in the poſſeſſion of which he obſtinately perſiſted, in ſpite of all the reproaches of his conſcience, and which he had cruelly refuſed to the neceſſities of his brethren. They now, however, eſcape from him: The maſs of earth is diſſipated before his eyes; his love, his regret for their loſs, and the guilt of having acquired them, are the only remaining proofs that they were once in his poſſeſſion.

Separation from the magnificence which ſurrounds him: From his proud edifices, in whoſe ſtately walls he once fondly believed he had erected an aſylum againſt death: From the vanity and luxury of his furniture, of all which no portion ſhall now remain to him, but the mournful cloth, which is to encircle him in the tomb: From that air of opulence, in the midſt of which he had always lived. All eſcape from him; all abandon him; and he begins to look upon himſelf as a ſtranger in the midſt of his palaces; where indeed he ought always to have conſidered himſelf

as ſuch; as an unknown, who no longer poſſeſſes any thing there; as an unfortunate wretch, whom they are on the point of ſtripping before his eyes, and whom they only allow to gratify his ſight with the ſpoils for a little while, in order to augment his regret, and his puniſhment.

Separation from his honours and offices, which he leaves, perhaps to a rival; to which he had at laſt attained, by wading through ſo many dangers, ſo many anxieties, ſo many meanneſſes, and which he had enjoyed with ſo much inſolence and pride. He is already on the bed of death, ſtript of all the marks of his dignities, and of all his titles, preſerving that of ſinner alone, which he in vain, and now too late, beſtows upon himſelf. Alas! in this laſt moment, he would gladly embrace the moſt ſervile condition; he would accept, as a favour, the moſt obſcure and the moſt grovelling ſtation, could but his days be prolonged on theſe conditions: He envies the lot of his ſlaves, whom he leaves behind him: He rapidly advances towards death, and turns back his eyes with regret, to take a lingering look of life.

Separation from his body, for whoſe gratification he had always lived, and with which, by favouring all its paſſions, he had contracted ſuch lively and intimate ties. He feels that the houſe of mud is crumbling into duſt; he feels the approaches of death in each of his ſenſes; he no longer holds to life, but by a careaſe which moulders away; by the cruel agonies which his diſeaſes make him feel; by the exceſs of his love for it, and which becomes more lively in proportion as he advances towards the moment of ſeparation. From his relations, from his friends, whom he ſees ſurrounding his bed, and whoſe tears and lamentations wring his heart, and make him cruelly feel the anguiſh of looſing them for ever.

Separation

Separation from the world, where he had enjoyed ſo many diſtinguiſhed offices; where he had eſtabliſhed, aggrandiſed, and arranged himſelf, as if it had been intended for the place of his eternal reſidence; from the world, in whoſe ſmiles he only lived; on whoſe ſtage he had ever been one of the principal actors; in whoſe tranſactions he had always taken ſuch an active part, and where he had figured with ſo much ſplendour, and ſo many talents, to render himſelf conſpicuous in it. His body now quits it; but his heart and all his affections are centered in it ſtill: The world dies to him, but he himſelf, in expiring, dies not to the world.

Then it is that the Almighty is great, in the eyes of the expiring ſinner. It is in that terrible moment, that the whole world crumbling, diſappearing from his ſight, he ſees only God, who remaineth, who filleth all, who alone changeth not, and paſſeth not away. Formerly he uſed to complain, with an impious and ironical air, that it is very difficult to feel any fervent emotions for a God whom we ſee not, and not to love beings whom we perceive, and who intereſt all our ſenſes. Ah! in this laſt moment, he ſhall ſee only God: The hitherto Inviſible will now be viſible to him; his ſenſes, already extinguiſhed, will reject all ſenſual objects; all ſhall vaniſh around him; and God will take the place of thoſe deluſions, which had miſled and deceived him through life.

Thus every thing changes to this unfortunate wretch; and theſe changes, with his ſeparations and ſurpriſes, occaſion the laſt bitterneſs of the ſpectacle of death.

Change in his credit and in his authority.—From the moment that nothing farther is to be expected from his life, the

the world ceaſes to reckon upon him: His pretended friends withdraw; his dependents already ſeek, elſewhere, other protectors, and other maſters: Even his ſlaves are employed in ſecuring to themſelves, after his death, an eſtabliſhment which may ſuit them; ſcarcely does a ſufficient number remain around him to catch his laſt ſighs. All abandon him; all withdraw themſelves: He no longer ſees around him that eager crowd of worſhippers; it is a ſucceſſor, perhaps, upon whom they already laviſh the ſame attentions; whilſt he, ſays Job, alone in the bed of his anguiſh, is no longer ſurrounded but by the horrors of death; already enters into that frightful ſolitude which the grave prepares for him, and makes bitter reflections on the inconſtancy of the world, and the little dependence to be placed on men.

Change in the public eſteem, with which he had been ſo flattered, ſo intoxicated.—Alas! that world, by which he had been ſo celebrated, has already forgotten him. The change which his death ſhall neceſſarily occaſion in the ſcene, may perhaps engage, for a few days, the public attention; but this ſhort interval over, and he ſhall be plunged in oblivion; ſcarcely will it be remembered that he has exiſted: Every tongue will now be employed in celebrating the abilities of a ſucceſſor, and exalting his character, upon the wrecks of his memory and reputation. He already perceives this neglect; that he has only to die, and the blank will ſpeedily be filled up; that no veſtige of him ſhall even remain in the world; and that the upright alone, who had ſeen him ſurrounded with all his pomp, will ſay to themſelves, Where is he now? Where now are thoſe flatteries which his greatneſs attracted? Behold to what the world conducts, and what is to be the portion of thoſe who ſerve it!

Change

Change in his body.—That fleſh, which he had flattered, idoliſed ſo much; that vain beauty, which had attracted ſo many glances, and corrupted ſo many hearts, is already but a ſpectacle of horror, whoſe ſight is hardly ſupportable; it is no longer but a carcaſe, which is approached with dread. That unfortunate creature, who had lighted up ſo many unjuſt paſſions. Alas! his friends, his relations, even his ſlaves avoid him, conceal themſelves, dare not approach him, but with precaution, and no longer beſtow upon him but the common offices of decency, and even theſe with reluctance. He himſelf ſhrinks with horror, and ſhudders at himſelf. I, ſays he to himſelf, who formerly attracted every look: "I call my ſervants, and they give me no an-"ſwer: My breath is corrupt; my days are extinct; the "grave is ready for me."—Job xix. 17.

Laſtly, change in every thing which ſurrounds him.—His eyes ſeek ſome reſting place, ſome object of comfort, and no where do they find but the dreary repreſentations of death. Yet even ſtill, the remembrance of the paſt, and the view of the preſent, would be little to the expiring ſinner; could he confine himſelf to theſe, he would not be ſo completely miſerable; but the thoughts of a futurity convulſe him with horror and deſpair. That futurity, that incomprehenſible region of darkneſs, which he now approaches, conſcience his only companion: That futurity, that unknown land from which no traveller has ever returned; where he knows not whom we ſhall find, nor what awaits him: That futurity, that fathomleſs abyſs, in which his mind is loſt and bewildered, and into which he muſt now plunge, ignorant of his deſtiny: That futurity, that tomb, that reſidence of horror, where he muſt now occupy his place amongſt the aſhes and the carcaſes of his anceſtors: That futurity, that incomprehenſible eternity,

even

even the aſpect of which he cannot ſupport: That futurity, in a word, that dreadful judgment to which, before the wrath of God, he muſt now appear, and render an account of a life, of which every moment almoſt has been occupied by crimes. Alas! while he only looked forward to this terrible futurity, at a diſtance, he made an infamous boaſt of not dreading it: He continually demanded, with a tone of blaſphemy and deriſion, Who is returned from it? He ridiculed the vulgar apprehenſions, and piqued himſelf upon his undaunted courage. But from the moment that the hand of God is upon him; from the moment that death approaches near, that the gates of eternity open to receive him, and that he touches upon that terrible futurity, againſt which he ſeemed ſo fortified; ah! he then becomes either weak, trembling, diſſolved in tears, raiſing up ſuppliant hands to heaven, or gloomy, ſilent, agitated, revolving within himſelf the moſt dreadful thoughts, and no longer expecting more conſolation or mercy, from his weak tears and lamentations, than from his frenzies and deſpair.

Yes, my brethren, this unfortunate wretch, who had always lulled himſelf in his exceſſes; always flattered himſelf that one good moment alone was neceſſary, one ſentiment of compunction before death, to appeaſe the anger of God, deſpairs then of his clemency. In vain is he told of his eternal mercies; he feels to what a degree he is unworthy of them: In vain the miniſter of the church endeavours to ſooth his terrors, by opening to him the boſom of his divine mercy; theſe promiſes touch him little, becauſe he knows well that the charity of the church, which never deſpairs of ſalvation for its children, cannot, however, alter the awful judgments of the juſtice of God. In vain is he promiſed forgiveneſs of his crimes; a ſecret and

and terrible voice reſounds from the bottom of his heart, and tells him, that there is no ſalvation for the impious, and that he can have no dependence upon promiſes which are given to his miſeries, rather than to the truth. In vain is he exhorted to apply to thoſe laſt remedies which the church offers to the dying: he regards them as deſperate reliefs, which are hazarded when hope is over; and which are beſtowed more for the conſolation of the living, than from any proſpect of utility to thoſe who are departing. Servants of Jeſus Chriſt are called in to ſupport him in this laſt moment; whilſt all he is enabled to do, is ſecretly to envy their lot, and to deteſt the miſery of his own: His friends and relations are aſſembled round his bed, to receive his laſt ſighs, and he turns away from them his eyes, becauſe he finds ſtill amidſt them the remembrance of his crimes. Death, however, approaches: The miniſter endeavours to ſupport, by prayer, that ſpark of life which ſtill remains: "Depart, Chriſtian ſoul," ſays he: He ſays not to him, Prince, grandee of the world, depart. During his life, the public monuments were hardly ſufficient for the number and pride of his titles: In this laſt moment, they give him that title alone which he had received in baptiſm; the only one to which he had paid no attention, and the only one which can remain to him for ever. Depart, Chriſtian ſoul." Alas! he had lived as if the body had formed his only being and treaſure: He had even tried to perſuade himſelf, that his ſoul was nothing: That man is only a compoſition of fleſh and blood, and that every thing periſhes with us: He is now informed, that it is his body, which is nothing but a morſel of clay, now on the point of crumbling into pieces; and that his only immortal being, is that ſoul, that image of the Divinity, that intelligence, alone capable of knowing and loving its Creator, which now prepares to quit its earthly manſion, and appear be-

fore his awful tribunal. Depart, Chriſtian ſoul. You had looked upon the earth as your country; and it was only a place of pilgrimage, from which you muſt depart: The Church thought to have announced glad tidings to you, the expiration of your exilement, in announcing the diſſolution of your earthly frame: Alas! and it only brings you melancholy and frightful news, and opens the commencement of your miſeries and anguiſh.

Depart then, Chriſtian ſoul. Soul, marked with the ſeal of ſalvation, which you have effaced. Redeemed by the blood of Jeſus Chriſt, whom you have trampled under foot: Purified by the grace of regeneration, which you have a thouſand times ſtained; enlightened by the lights of the faith, which you have always rejected; loaded with all the tender mercies of Heaven, which you have always unworthily profaned. Depart, Chriſtian ſoul. Go, and carry before Jeſus Chriſt that auguſt title, which ſhould have been the illuſtrious mark of your ſalvation, but which now becomes the greateſt of your crimes.

Then, the expiring ſinner, no longer finding in the remembrance of the paſt, but regrets which overwhelm him: In all which takes place around him, but images which afflict him: In the thoughts of futurity, but horrors which appal him: No longer knowing to whom to have recourſe; neither to created beings, who now leave him; nor to the world, which vaniſhes; nor to men, who cannot ſave him from death; nor to the Juſt God, whom he looks upon as a declared enemy, and from whom he has no indulgence to expect; a thouſand horrors occupy his thoughts; he torments, he agitates himſelf, in order to fly from death which graſps him, or at leaſt to fly from himſelf: From his expiring eyes, iſſue ſomething, I know not what of, dark and gloomy,

gloomy, which expreſſes the fury of his ſoul; in his anguiſh, he utters words interrupted by ſobs, which are unintelligible; and to which they know not whether repentance or deſpair gives birth. He is ſeized with convulſions, which they are ignorant whether to aſcribe to the actual diſſolution of his body, or to the ſoul which feels the approach of its Judge: He deeply ſighs; and they know not whether the remembrance of his paſt crimes, or the deſpair at quitting life, forces from him ſuch groans of anguiſh. At laſt, in the midſt of theſe melancholy exertions, his eyes fix, his features change, his countenance becomes disfigured, his livid lips convulſively ſeparate; his whole frame quivers; and, by this laſt effort, his unfortunate ſoul tears itſelf reluctantly from that body of clay, falls into the hands of its God, and finds itſelf alone at the foot of the awful tribunal.

My brethren, in this manner do thoſe expire who forget their Creator during life. Thus ſhall you yourſelves die, if your crimes accompany you to that laſt moment.

Every thing will change in your eyes, and you ſhall not change yourſelves: You ſhall die, and you ſhall die in ſin, as you have lived; and your death will be ſimilar to your life. Prevent this miſery, O my brethren. Live the life of the righteous; and your death, ſimilar, to theirs, will be accompanied with joy, peace, and conſolation. This is what I mean to explain in the ſecond part of this Diſcourſe.

PART II.—I know, that even to the moſt upright ſouls, there is always ſomething terrible in death. The judgments of God, whoſe profound ſecrecy they dread; the darkneſſes of their own conſcience, in which they continually figure

figure to themſelves hidden ſtains, known to the Almighty alone; the livelineſs of their faith, and of their love, which in their own ſight magnifies their ſmalleſt faults; in a word, the diſſolution itſelf of their earthly frame, and the natural horror we feel for the grave: All theſe occaſion death to be attended by a natural ſenſation of dread and repugnance, in ſo much, that as St. Paul ſays, the moſt upright themſelves, who anxiouſly long to be clothed with that immortality promiſed to them, would yet willingly attain it, without being diveſted of the mortality which encompaſſes them.

It is not leſs true, however, that in them, grace riſes ſuperior to that horror at death, which ſprings from Nature; and in that moment, whether they recal the paſt, conſider the preſent, or look forward to the future, they find, in the remembrance of the paſt, the end of their troubles; in the conſideration of the preſent, a novelty, which moves them with a holy joy; in their views towards the future, the certainty of an eternity, which fills them with rapture; in ſo much, that the ſame ſituations, which are the occaſion of deſpair to the dying ſinner, become then an abundant ſource of conſolation to the faithful ſoul.

I ſay, whether they recal the paſt: And here, my brethren, figure to yourſelves a righteous character on the bed of death, who has long, by the practice of Chriſtian works, prepared himſelf for this laſt moment; has amaſſed a treaſure of righteouſneſs, that he may not appear empty-handed in the preſence of his Judge; and has lived in faith, that he may die in peace, and in all the conſolations of hope: Figure to yourſelves this ſoul, reaching at laſt that final hour, of which he had never loſt ſight, and with which he had always connected all the troubles, all the wants, all

the

the ſelf-denials, all the events of his mortal life. I ſay that nothing is more ſoothing to him, than the remembrance of the paſt; of his ſufferings, of his mortifications, of all the trials which he has undergone.

Yes, my brethren, it appears frightful to you at preſent to ſuffer for God. The ſmalleſt exertions upon yourſelves required by religion, ſeem to overpower you; you conſider as unhappy thoſe who bear the yoke of Jeſus Chriſt, and who, to pleaſe him, renounce the world, and all its charms. But on the bed of death, the moſt ſoothing reflection to a faithful ſoul, is the remembrance of what he has ſuffered for his God. He then comprehends all the merit of penitence, and how abſurd men are, to diſpute with God, a moment of conſtraint, which will be entitled to the recompenſe of a felicity without end, and without meaſure. For then, his conſolation is, that he has ſacrificed only the gratifications of a moment, of which there would only remain to him now, the confuſion and the ſhame; that whatever he might have ſuffered for the world, would in this moment be loſt to him; on the contrary, that the ſmalleſt ſuffering for God, a tear, a mortification, a vain pleaſure ſacrificed, an improper deſire repreſſed, will never be forgotten, but ſhall laſt as long as God himſelf. What conſoles him is, that of all the human luxuries and enjoyments, alas! on the bed of death there remain no more to the ſinner who has always indulged in them, than to the righteous man who has always abſtained from them: that they are equally paſt to them both; but that the one ſhall bear eternally the guilt of having delivered himſelf up to them, and the other the glory of having known how to vanquiſh them.

This

This is what the paſt offers to a faithful ſoul, on the bed of death. Sufferings, afflictions, which have endured but a little while, and which are now to be eternally rewarded: The time of dangers and temptations paſt; the attacks made by the world upon his faith at laſt terminated; the trials in which his innocence had run ſo many riſks, at laſt diſappeared; the occaſions in which his virtue had ſo nearly been ſhipwrecked, at laſt for ever removed; the continual combats which he had to ſuſtain againſt his paſſions, at laſt ended; and every obſtacle which fleſh and blood had always placed in the way of his piety, for ever annihilated. How ſweet it is, when ſafely arrived in port, to recal the remembrance of paſt dangers and tempeſts! When victorious in the race, how pleaſing to retrace, in imagination, our exertions, and to review thoſe parts of the courſe moſt diſtinguiſhed by the toils, the obſtacles, and the difficulties which have rendered them celebrated.

The righteous man then appears to me like another Moſes, expiring on the holy mountain, where the Lord had marked out to him his grave: "Get thee up into the mountain Abarim, and die," &c. Deut. xxxii. 49; who before he expired, looking down from that ſacred place, and caſting his eyes over that extent of country, the nations and kingdoms he had traverſed, and now leaves behind him, reviews, in imagination, the numberleſs dangers he had eſcaped; his battles with ſo many conquered nations; the fatigues of the deſart; the ſnares of Midian; the murmurs and calumnies of his brethren; the rocks ſplit in pieces; the dangers of Egypt avoided; the waters of the Red Sea got over; hunger, thirſt, and wearineſs ſtruggled againſt; and touching at laſt the happy term of ſo many labours, and viewing from afar that country promiſed to his

his fathers, he ſings a ſong of thankſgiving and praiſe to God; dies tranſported with joy, both at the remembrance of ſo many dangers avoided, and at the proſpect of that place of reſt, which the Lord ſhews him from afar; and looks upon the holy mountain, where he is to expire, as the reward of his toils, and the happy term of his courſe.

Not that the remembrance of the paſt, in recalling to the dying righteous ſoul the trials and dangers of his paſt life, does not alſo remind him of his infidelities and wanderings; but theſe are errors expiated by the ſighs of repentance; wanderings which have fortunately been followed by a renewal of fervour and fidelity; wanderings which recal to him the mercies of God to his ſoul, who hath made his crimes the means of his repentance, his paſſions of his converſion, and his errors of his ſalvation. The grief for his faults, in this laſt moment, becomes only a ſorrow of conſolation and tenderneſs; and tears which this remembrance draws from him ſtill, are no longer but the tears of joy and gratitude.

The former mercies of God to his ſoul fill him with confidence, and inſpire him with a juſt hope of more; the paſt conduct of God, with regard to him, comforts his heart, and ſeems to anſwer for what he ſhall experience in future. He no longer, as in the days of his penitence and mourning, figures to himſelf the Almighty under the idea of a terrible and ſevere judge, whom he had inſulted, and whom it was neceſſary to appeaſe; but as the Father of mercies, and a God of all conſolation, who prepares to receive him into his boſom, and there ſhelter him from all his afflictions.

" Awake,

"Awake, righteous ſoul," ſays then to him in ſecret his Lord and his God; "Thou, who haſt drunken the "dregs of the cup of trembling, thou ſhalt no more drink "it again; the days of thy tribulation are paſt. Shake "thyſelf from the duſt, ariſe, and ſit down; looſe thy- "ſelf from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of "Zion: Put on thy ſtrength, put on thy beautiful gar- "ments: Enter into the everlaſting joy of thy Lord, where "thou ſhalt obtain gladneſs and peace, and ſorrow and "mourning ſhall flee away." Iſaiah li. 17. &c.

Firſt conſolation of the upright ſoul in the bed of death; the remembrance of the paſt.—But all which takes place around him; the world which flies from him; all created beings which diſappear; all that phantom of vanity which vaniſhes; this change, this novelty, is the ſource ſtill of a thouſand conſolations to him.

We have juſt ſeen, that the deſpair of the dying ſinner, in viewing what paſſes around him, is occaſioned by his ſurpriſes, his ſeparations, his changes; theſe are preciſely the ſources of conſolation to the faithful ſoul in this laſt moment. Nothing ſurpriſes him: He is ſeparated from nothing: In his eyes nothing is changed.

Nothing ſurpriſes him.—The hour of the Lord ſurpriſes him not; he expected, he longed for it. The thought of this laſt moment accompanied all his actions, entered into all his projects, regulated all his deſires, and animated his whole conduct through life. Every hour, every moment, ſeemed to him the one which the upright judge had appointed for that dreadful reckoning, where righteouſneſs itſelf

itſelf ſhall be judged. Thus had he lived, inceſſantly preparing his ſoul for that laſt hour. Thus he expires, tranquil, conſoled, without ſurpriſe or dread, in the peace of his Lord; death never approaching nearer to him than he had always beheld it; and experiencing no difference betwixt the day of his death, and the ordinary ones of his life.

Beſides, what occaſions the ſurpriſe and the deſpair of the ſinner on the bed of death, is to ſee that the world, in which he had ever placed all his confidence, is nothing, is but a dream, which vaniſhes and is annihilated.

But the faithful ſoul, in his laſt moment; ah! he ſees the world in the ſame light he had always viewed it: as a ſhadow which flitteth away; as a vapour which deceives at a diſtance, but, when approached, has neither reality nor ſubſtance. He feels then the holy joy of having eſtimated the world according to its merit; of having judged with propriety; of never being attached to what muſt one day ſlip from him in a moment; and of having placed his confidence in God alone, who remaineth for ever, eternally to reward thoſe who truſt in him.

How ſweet then to a faithful ſoul, to ſay to himſelf, I have made the happieſt choice; how fortunate for me, that I attached myſelf only to God, ſince he alone will endure to me for ever! My choice was regarded as a folly; the world laughed it to ſcorn, and found me whimſical and ſingular in not conforming myſelf to its ways: but now this laſt moment verifies all. It is death that decides on which ſide are the wiſe or the fooliſh, and which of the two has judged aright, the worldly or the faithful.

Thus does the upright ſoul, on the bed of death, view the world and all its glory. When the miniſters of the church come to converſe with him of God, and the nothingneſs of all human things, theſe holy truths, ſo new to the ſinner in that laſt moment, are ſubjects familiar to him, objects of which he had never loſt ſight: Theſe conſolatory truths are then his ſweeteſt occupation; he meditates upon, he enjoys them, he draws them from the bottom of his heart, where they had always been cheriſhed, to place them full in his view, and he contemplates them with joy. The miniſter of Jeſus Chriſt ſpeaks no new or foreign language to him; it is the language of his heart; they are the ſentiments of his whole life. Nothing ſooths him ſo much then, as to hear that God ſpoken of, whom he had always loved; thoſe eternal riches, which he had always coveted; that happineſs of another life, for which he had always ſighed; and the nothingneſs of that world, which he had always deſpiſed. All other ſubjects of converſation become inſipid to him; he can liſten only to the mercies of the God of his fathers, and he regrets the moments as loſt, which muſt neceſſarily be devoted to the regulation of an earthly manſion, and the ſucceſſion of his anceſtors. Great God! What knowledge! What peace! What delicious tranſports! What holy emotions of love, of joy, of confidence, of thankſgiving, then fill the ſoul of this righteous character! His faith is renewed; his love is invigorated; his fervour is excited; his compunction is awakened. The nearer the diſſolution of the earthly man approaches, the more is the new man completed and perfected! The more his manſion of clay crumbles, the more is his ſoul purified and exalted: In proportion as the body falls into ruin, the ſpirit is diſengaged and renewed; like a pure and brilliant flame, which aſcends and ſhines forth with additional ſplendour, in proportion as it diſengages

itſelf

itſelf from the remains of matter which held it down, and as the ſubſtance to which it was attached is conſumed and diſſipated.

Alas! All diſcourſes upon God fatigue the ſinner on the bed of death: They irritate his evils; his head ſuffers by them, and his reſt is diſturbed: It becomes neceſſary to manage his weakneſs, by venturing only a few words at proper periods; to do it with precaution, leſt their length ſhould incommode him; to chuſe the moments for ſpeaking to him of the God who is ready to judge him, and whom he has never known. Holy artifices of charity are required, nay deception is even neceſſary ſometimes, to make him beſtow a thought upon his ſalvation. Even the miniſters of the church but rarely approach him, becauſe they well know that their preſence is only an intruſion. They are excluded, as diſagreeable and melancholy prophets; his friends around him carefully turn the converſation from ſalvation, as conveying the news of death, and as a diſmal ſubject which wearies him; they endeavour to enliven his ſpirits, by relating the affairs and vanities of the age, which had engroſſed him during life. Great God! and thou permitteſt that this unfortunate wretch ſhall bear, even to death, his diſlike to truth; that worldly images ſhall ſtill occupy him in this laſt moment; and that they ſhall dread to ſpeak to him of his God, whom he has always dreaded to ſerve, and to know!

But let us not loſe ſight of the faithful ſoul: Not only he ſees nothing on the bed of death which ſurpriſes him, but he is likewiſe ſeparated from nothing which he laments or regrets. For what can death ſeparate him from, to occaſion either regret or tears? From the world? Alas! from a world, in which he had always lived as an exile; in

in which he had found only ſhameful exceſſes, which grieved his faith; rocks at which his innocence trembled; attentions, which were troubleſome to him; ſubjections, which in ſpite of himſelf, ſtill divided him betwixt heaven and the earth: We feel little regret for the loſs of what we have never loved. From his riches and wealth? Alas! his treaſure was in heaven: His riches had been the riches of the poor: He loſes them not; he only goes to regain them for ever, in the boſom of God. From his titles and his dignities? Alas! it is a yoke from which he is delivered: The only title dear to him, was the one he had received in baptiſm, which he now bears to the preſence of God, and which conſtitutes his claim to the eternal promiſes. From his relations and friends? Alas! he knows that he only precedes them by a moment; that death cannot ſeparate thoſe whom charity had joined upon the earth; and that, ſoon united together in the boſom of God, they ſhall again form the ſame church, and the ſame people, and ſhall enjoy the delights of an immortal ſociety. From his children? He leaves to them the Lord as a father; his example and inſtructions as an inheritance; his good wiſhes and his bleſſing as a final conſolation: And, like David, he expires in entreating for his ſon Solomon, not temporal proſperities, but a perfect heart, love of the law, and the fear of the God of his fathers. From his body? Alas! from that body which he had always chaſtiſed, crucified; which he conſidered as his enemy; which kept him ſtill dependent upon the ſenſes and the fleſh; which overwhelmed him under the weight of ſo many humiliating wants; from that houſe of clay, which confined him priſoner; which prolonged the days of his baniſhment and his ſlavery, and retarded his union with Jeſus Chriſt: Ah! like St. Paul, he earneſtly wiſhes its diſſolution: It is an irkſome clothing, from which he is delivered;

delivered; it is a wall of ſeparation from his God, which is deſtroyed; and which now leaves him free, and qualified to make his flight towards the eternal mountains. Thus death ſeparates him from nothing, becauſe faith had already ſeparated him from all.

I do not add, that the changes which take place on the bed of death, ſo full of deſpair to the ſinner, change nothing in the faithful ſoul. His reaſon, it is true, decays; but for a long time paſt, he had ſubjected it to the yoke of faith, and extinguiſhed its vain lights before the light of God, and the profundity of his myſteries. His expiring eyes become darkened, and are cloſed upon all viſible objects; but long ago they had been fixed on the inviſible alone. His tongue is immoveable; but he had long before planted the guard of circumſpection on it, and meditated in ſilence the mercies of the God of his fathers. All his ſenſes are blunted, and loſe their natural uſe; but for a long time paſt, he had himſelf interdicted their influence. He had eyes, and ſaw not; ears, and heard not; taſte, and reliſhed only the things of heaven. Nothing is changed, therefore, to this ſoul, on the bed of death. His body falls in pieces; all created beings vaniſh from his eyes; light retires; all nature returns to nothing; and, in the midſt of all theſe changes, he alone changeth not; he alone is always the ſame.

How grand, my brethren, does faith render the righteous on the bed of death! How worthy of God, of angels, and of men, is the ſight of the upright ſoul in that laſt moment! It is then that the faithful heart appears maſter of the world, and of all the created; it is then, that participating already in the greatneſs and the immutability of the God to whom he is on the eve of being united, he is elevated above

above all; in the world, without any connection with it; in a mortal body, without being chained to it; in the midſt of his relations and friends, without ſeeing or knowing them; in the midſt of the embarraſſments and changes which his death opens to his ſight, without the ſmalleſt interruption to his tranquillity: He is already fixed in the boſom of God, in the midſt of the deſtruction of all things. Once more, my brethren, how grand it is to have lived in the obſervance of the law of the Lord, and to die in his fear! With what dignity does not faith then diſplay itſelf in the righteous ſoul? It is the moment of his glory and triumph; it is the centre at which the whole luſtre of his life and of his virtues unite.

How beautiful to ſee the righteous man, then moving with a tranquil and majeſtic peace towards eternity! And with reaſon did the falſe Prophet cry out, when he ſaw the triumphal march of the Iſraelites entering into the land of Promiſe, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let "my end be like his." Numbers xxiii. 10.

And behold, my brethren, what completely fills with joy and conſolation the faithful ſoul on the bed of death: It is the thought of futurity. The ſinner, during health, looks forward to a future ſtate with a tranquil eye; but in this laſt moment, beholding its approach, his tranquillity is changed into ſhudderings and terror. The upright man, on the contrary, during the days of his mortal life, durſt never regard, with a fixed eye, the depth and the extent of God's judgments: He wrought out his ſalvation with fear and trembling; he ſhuddered at the very thought of that dreadful futurity, where even the juſt, if judged without mercy, ſhall hardly be ſaved: But, on the bed of death, ah! The God of Peace who diſplays himſelf to him, calms

calms his agitations; his fears immediately ceaſe, and are changed into a ſweet hope. He already pierces, with expiring eyes, through that cloud of mortality which ſtill ſurrounds him, and ſees the throne of glory, and the Son of Man at his Father's right hand, ready to receive him; that immortal country, for which he had longed ſo much, and upon which his mind had always dwelt; that Holy Zion, which the God of his fathers filleth with his glory and his preſence; where he overfloweth the elect with a torrent of delights, and maketh them for ever to enjoy the incomprehenſible riches which he hath prepared for thoſe who love him; that city of the people of God, the reſidence of the ſaints, the habitation of the juſt, and of the Prophets, where he ſhall again find his brethren, with whom charity had united him on the earth, and with whom he will bleſs eternally the tender mercies of the Lord, and join with them in halelujahs to his praiſe.

. . . . . .

Ah! when alſo the miniſters of the church come to announce to this ſoul, that the hour is come, and that eternity approaches; when they come to tell him, in the name of the Church, which ſends them: "Depart, Chriſtian "ſoul: Quit at laſt that earth, where you have ſo long "been a ſtranger and a captive: The time of trial and "tribulation is over: Behold, at laſt, the upright Judge, "who comes to ſtrike off the chains of your mortality: "Return to the boſom of God, from whence you came: "Quit now a world, which was unworthy of you: The "Almighty hath at laſt been touched with your tears: He "at laſt openeth to you the gate of eternity, the gate of "the upright: Depart faithful ſoul; Go, and unite thy-"ſelf to the Heavenly Church, which expects thee: On-"ly remember your brethren, whom you leave upon the "earth, ſtill expoſed to temptations and to ſtorms: Be

"touched

" touched with the melancholy ſtate of the Church, here " below, which has given you birth in Jeſus Chriſt, and " which envies your departure: Entreat the end of her " captivity, and her re-union with her ſpouſe, from whom " ſhe is ſtill ſeparated. Thoſe who ſleep in the Lord, pe- " riſh not for ever: We only quit you on the earth, in or- " der to regain you in a little time with Jeſus Chriſt, in " the kingdom of the Holy: The body, which you are " on the point of leaving a prey to worms and to putrefac- " tion, ſhall ſoon follow you, immortal and glorious. Not " a hair of your head ſhall periſh. There ſhall remain in " your aſhes, a ſeed of immortality, even to the day of " revelation, when your parched bones ſhall be vivified, " and again appear more reſplendent than light: What " happineſs for you, to be at laſt quit of all the miſeries " which ſtill afflict us, to be no longer expoſed, like your " brethren, to loſe that God, whom you go to enjoy; to " ſhut your eyes, at laſt, on all the ſcandals which grieve " us; on that vanity, which ſeduces us; on thoſe exam- " ples, which lead us aſtray; on thoſe attachments, which " engroſs us; and on thoſe troubles, which conſume us! " What happineſs, to quit at laſt a place, where every " thing tires, and every thing ſullies us; where we are a " burden to ourſelves, and where we only exiſt, in order " to be unhappy; and to go to a reſidence of peace, of " joy, of quiet, where our only occupation will be to en- " joy the God whom we love."

What bleſſed tidings, then, of joy and immortality, to this righteous ſoul! What bleſſed arrangement! With what peace, what confidence, what thankſgivings, does he not accept! He raiſes, like old Simeon, his dying eyes to heaven; and viewing the Lord, who cometh inwardly, ſays to him, " Break, O my God, when thou pleaſeſt, " theſe

"theſe remains of mortality; theſe feeble ties, which "ſtill keep me here: I wait, in peace and in hope the ef- "fects of thine eternal promiſes." Thus purified by the expiation of an holy and Chriſtian life, fortified by the laſt remedies of the Church, waſhed in the blood of the Lamb, ſupported by the hope of the promiſes, and ripe for eternity, he ſhuts his eyes with an holy joy on all ſublunary creatures: He tranquilly goes to ſleep in the Lord, and returns to the boſom of that God from whence he came.

My brethren, any obſervations here would be uſeleſs. Such is the end of thoſe who have lived in the fear of the Lord: Their death is precious before God, like their life. Such is the deplorable end of thoſe, who have neglected him to that laſt hour: The death of a ſinner is abominable in the eyes of the Lord, equally as their life. If you live in ſin, you will die in all the horrors, and in all the uſeleſs regrets of the ſinner, and your death ſhall be an eternal death. If you live in righteouſneſs, you will die in peace, and in the confidence of the juſt, and your death will be only a paſſage to a bleſſed immortality.

Now, to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghoſt, be all honour and glory, now, henceforth, and for evermore. Amen.

SERMON XI.

ON CHARITY.

JOHN vi. 11.

And Jeſus took the loaves, and, when he had given thanks, he diſtributed to the diſciples, and the diſciples to them that were ſet down.

IT is not without deſign that our Saviour aſſociates the diſciples, in the prodigy of multiplying the loaves, and that he makes uſe of their miniſtry in diſtributing the miraculous food among a people preſſed with hunger and want. He might, again, no doubt, have made manna to rain upon the deſert, and ſaved to his diſciples the trouble of ſo painful a diſtribution.

But, might he not, alſo, after raiſing up Lazarus from the dead, diſpenſed with their aſſiſtance in unlooſing him? Could his Almighty voice, which had juſt broken aſunder the chains of death, have found any reſiſtance from the feeble bands which the hand of man had formed? It is becauſe he wiſhed to point out to them beforehand the ſacred exerciſe of their miniſtry; the part they were afterwards to have in the ſpiritual reſurrection of ſinners; and that whatever they ſhould unlooſe upon the earth ſhould be unlooſed in heaven.

Again.

Again, when there was queſtion of paying tribute to Ceſar, he might have avoided the ſnare of Peter, by producing a piece of money out of the bowels of a fiſh: He who, even from ſtones, was able to raiſe up children of Abraham, might ſurely with greater eaſe have converted them into a precious metal, and thereby furniſhed the amount of the tribute due to Ceſar! But, in the character of Head of the Church, he meant to teach his miniſters to reſpect thoſe in authority; and, by rendering honour and tribute to the powers eſtabliſhed by God, to ſet an example of ſubmiſſion to other believers.

Thus, in making uſe, upon this occaſion, of the intervention of the apoſtles to diſtribute the loaves to the multitude, his deſign is, to accuſtom all his diſciples to compaſſion and liberality towards the unfortunate: He eſtabliſhes you the miniſters of his providence, and multiplies the riches of the earth in your hands, for the ſole purpoſe of being diſtributed from thence among that multitude of unfortunate fellow-creatures which ſurrounds you. He, do doubt, might nouriſh them himſelf, as he formerly nouriſhed Paul and Elijah in the deſert; without your interference he might comfort thoſe creatures which bear his image; he, whoſe inviſible hand prepares food even for the young ravens which invoke him in their want; but he wiſhes to aſſociate you in the merit of his liberality; he wiſhes you to be placed betwixt himſelf and the poor, like refreſhing clouds, always ready to ſhower upon them thoſe fructifying ſtreams which you have only received for their advantage.

Such is the order of his providence; it was neceſſary that means of ſalvation ſhould be provided for all men: riches would corrupt the heart, if charity were not to expiate

expiate their abuſe; indigence would fatigue and weary out virtue, if the ſuccours of compaſſion were not to ſoften its bitterneſs; the poor facilitate to the rich the pardon of their pleaſures; the rich animate the poor not to loſe the merit of their ſufferings.

Apply yourſelf, then, be whom you may, to all the conſequence of this goſpel. If you groan under the yoke of poverty, the tenderneſs and the care of Jeſus Chriſt towards all the wants of a wandering and unprovided people will conſole you: If born to opulence, the example of the diſciples will now inſtruct you. You will there ſee, *1ſtly*, The pretexts which they oppoſe to the duty of charity confuted: *2dly*, You will learn what ought to be its rules. That is to ſay, that in the firſt part of this diſcourſe we ſhall eſtabliſh this duty againſt all the vain excuſes of avarice; in the ſecond we ſhall inſtruct you in the manner of fulfilling it againſt even the defects of charity; it is the moſt natural inſtruction with which the hiſtory of the goſpel preſents us.

PART I.—It is ſcarcely a matter of controverſy now in the world, whether the law of God make a precept to us of charity: The goſpel is ſo pointed on this duty; the ſpirit and the ground-work of religion lead us ſo naturally to it; the idea alone which we have of Providence, in the diſpenſation of temporal things, leaves ſo little room on that point to opinion or doubt, that, though many be ignorant of the extent of this obligation, yet there are almoſt none who do not admit of the foundation and principle.

Who, indeed, is ignorant that the Lord, whoſe providence hath regulated all things with an order ſo admirable and

and beautiful, and prepared food even for the beaſts of the field, would never have left men, created after his own image, a prey to hunger and indigence, whilſt he would liberally ſhower upon a ſmall number of happy individuals the bleſſings of heaven and the fat of the earth, if he had not intended that the abundance of the one ſhould ſupply the neceſſities of the other?

Who is ignorant that originally every thing belonged in common to all men; that ſimple nature knew neither property nor portions; and that, at firſt, ſhe left each of us in poſſeſſion of the univerſe? But that in order to put bounds to avarice, and to avoid trouble and diſſenſions, the common conſent of the people eſtabliſhed that the wiſeſt, the moſt humane, and the moſt upright, ſhould likewiſe be the moſt opulent; that beſides the portion of wealth deſtined to them by nature, they ſhould alſo be charged with that of the weakeſt, to be its depoſitaries, and to defend it againſt uſurpation and violence: conſequently, that they were eſtabliſhed by nature itſelf as the guardians of the unfortunate, and that whatever ſurplus they had was only the patrimony of their brethren confided to their care and their equity?

Who, laſtly, is ignorant that the ties of religion have ſtill more firmly cemented the firſt bonds of union which nature had formed among men; that the grace of Jeſus Chriſt, which brought forth the firſt believers, made of them not only one heart and one ſoul, but alſo one family, where the idea of individual property was exploded; and that the goſpel, making it a law to us to love our brethren as ourſelves, no longer permits us to be ignorant of their wants, or to be inſenſible to their ſorrows?

But

But it is with the duty of charity as with all the other duties of the law; in general, the obligation is not, even in idea, denied; but, does the circumſtance of its fulfilment take place? A pretext is never wanting, either to diſpenſe with it entirely, or at leaſt to be quit for a moiety of the duty. Now, it would appear that the ſpirit of God hath meant to point out to us all theſe pretexts, in the anſwers which the diſciples made to Jeſus Chriſt in order to excuſe themſelves from aſſiſting the famiſhed multitude which had followed him to the deſert.

In the firſt place, they remind him, that they had ſcarcely wherewithal to ſupply their own wants; and that only five loaves of barley, and two fiſhes remained: behold the firſt pretext, made uſe of by covetouſneſs, in oppoſition to the duty of compaſſion. Scarcely have they ſufficient for themſelves; they have a name and a rank to ſupport in the world; children to eſtabliſh; creditors to ſatisfy; public charges to ſupport; a thouſand expences of pure benevolence, to which attention muſt be paid; now, what is any income, not entirely unlimited, to ſuch endleſs demands? in this manner, the world continually ſpeaks; and a world the moſt brilliant, and the moſt ſumptuous.

Now, I well know, that the limits of what is called a ſufficiency, are not the ſame for all ſtations; that they extend in proportion to rank and birth; that one ſtar, ſays the apoſtle, muſt differ in luſtre from another; that, even from the apoſtolic ages, men were ſeen in the aſſemblies of believers, clothed in robes of diſtinction, with rings of gold, while others, of a more obſcure ſtation, were forced to content themſelves with the apparel neceſſary to cover their nakedneſs; that, conſequently, religion doth not confound ſtations; and that, if it forbid thoſe who dwell in the

the palaces of kings to be effeminate in their manners, and indecently luxurious in their dreſs, it doth not at the ſame time preſcribe to them the poverty, and the ſimplicity of thoſe who dwell in cottages, or of thoſe who form the lower ranks of the people? I know it.

But, my brethren, it is an inconteſtible truth, that, whatever ſurplus you may have, belongs not to you; that it is the portion of the poor, and, that you are entitled to conſider as your own only that proportion of your revenues which is neceſſary to ſupport that ſtation in which Providence hath placed you. I aſk, then, is it the goſpel, or covetouſneſs, which muſt regulate that ſufficiency? Would you dare to pretend, that all thoſe vanities, of which cuſtom has now made a law, are to be held in the ſight of God, as expences inſeparable from your condition? That every thing which flatters, and is agreeable to you, which nouriſhes your pride, gratifies your caprices, and corrupts your heart, is for that reaſon neceſſary to you? That all which you ſacrifice to the fortune of a child, in order to raiſe him above his anceſtors; all which you riſk in gaming; that luxury, which either ſuits not your birth, or is an abuſe of it: would you dare to pretend, that all theſe have inconteſtible claims on your revenues, which are to be preferred to thoſe of charity? Laſtly, Would you dare to pretend, that, becauſe your father, perhaps obſcure, and of the loweſt rank, may have left to you all his wealth, and perhaps his crimes, you are entitled to forget your family, and the houſe of your father, in order to mingle with the higheſt ranks, and to ſupport the ſame eclat, becauſe, you are enabled to ſupport the ſame expence?

If this be the caſe, my brethren, if you conſider as a ſurplus only, that which may eſcape from your pleaſure,

from

from your extravagancies, and from your caprices, you have only to be voluptuous, capricious, diſſolute and prodigal, in order to be wholly diſpenſed from the duty of charity. The more paſſions you ſhall have to ſatisfy, the more will your obligation to charity diminiſh; and your exceſſes, which the Lord hath commanded you to expiate by acts of compaſſion, will themſelves become a privilege to diſpenſe yourſelves from them. There muſt neceſſarily, therefore, be ſome rule here to obſerve, and ſome limits to appoint ourſelves, different from thoſe of avarice: and behold it, my brethren, the rule of faith. Whatever tends to nouriſh only the life of the ſenſes, to flatter the paſſions, to countenance the vain pomp and abuſes of the world, is ſuperfluous to a Chriſtian; theſe are what you ought to retrench, and to ſet apart; theſe are the funds and the heritage of the poor; you are only their depoſitaries, and you cannot encroach upon them, without uſurpation and injuſtice. The goſpel reduces to very little the ſufficiency of a Chriſtian, however exalted in the world; religion, retrenches much from the expences; and did we live all according to the rules of faith, our wants, which would no longer be multiplied by our paſſions, would ſtill be fewer: the greateſt part of our wealth, would be found entirely uſeleſs; and as in the firſt age of faith, indigence would no longer grieve the church, nor be ſeen among believers. Our expences continually increaſe, becauſe our paſſions are every day multiplied; the opulence of our fathers is no longer to us but an uncomfortable poverty; and our great riches can no longer ſuffice, becauſe nothing can ſatisfy thoſe who refuſe themſelves nothing.

And in order to give this truth all the extent which the ſubject in queſtion demands, I aſk you, *2dly*, Do the elevation

vation and abundance in which you are born diſpenſe you from ſimplicity, frugality, modeſty, and holy reſtraint: By being born great, you are not the leſs Chriſtians. In vain, like thoſe Iſraelites in the deſert, have you amaſſed more manna than your brethren; you cannot preſerve for your uſe more than the meaſure preſcribed by the law. Were it not ſo, our Saviour would have forbidden pomp, luxury, and worldly pleaſures, but to the poor and unfortunate; thoſe to whom the miſery of their condition renders needleſs that defence.

Now, this grand truth admitted; if, according to the rule of faith it be not permitted to you, to employ your riches in the gratification of your appetites; if the rich be obliged to bear the croſs, continually to renounce themſelves, and to look for no conſolation in this world, equally as the poor; what can the deſign of Providence have been, in pouring upon you all the riches of the earth? And, what advantage could even accrue to you, from them? Could it be in order to adminiſter to your irregular deſires? But, you are no longer bound to the fleſh, to live according to the fleſh. Could it be in order to ſupport the pride of rank and birth? But, whatever you give to vanity, you cut off from charity. Could it be for the purpoſe of hoarding up for your poſterity? But your treaſure ſhould be only in heaven. Could it be in order that you might paſs your life more agreeably? But if you weep not, if you ſuffer not, if you combat not, you are loſt. Could it be in order to attach you more ſtrongly to the world? But the Chriſtian is not of this world: he is a citizen of the age to come. Could it be for the purpoſe of aggrandiſing your poſſeſſions and your inheritances? But, you would never aggrandiſe but the place of your exile; and the gain of the whole world would be vain, if you there-

by loſt your ſoul. Could it be that your table might be loaded with the moſt exquiſite diſhes? But, you well know, that the goſpel forbids a life of ſenſuality and voluptuouſneſs, equally to the rich, as to the indigent. Review all the advantages, which according to the world, you can reap from your proſperity, and you will find almoſt the whole of them forbidden by the law of God.

It has not, therefore, been his deſign, that they ſhould be merely for your own purpoſes, when he multiplied in your hands the riches of the earth. It is not for yourſelf that you are born to grandeur; it is not for yourſelf, as Mordecai formerly ſaid to the pious Eſther, that the Lord hath exalted you to this point of proſperity and grandeur; it is for the ſake of his afflicted people; it is to be the protector of the unfortunate. If you fulfil not the intentions of God, with regard to you, continued that wiſe Iſraelite, he will employ ſome other, who ſhall more faithfully ſerve him; he will tranſfer to them that crown which was intended for you; he will elſewhere provide the enlargement and deliverance of his afflicted people; for he will not permit them to periſh; but you and your father's houſe ſhall periſh. In the deſigns of the Almighty, you therefore are but the miniſters of his providence, towards thoſe who ſuffer; your great riches are only ſacred depoſits, which his goodneſs hath entruſted to your care, for ſecurity againſt uſurpation and violence, and in order to be more ſafely preſerved for the widow and the orphan: your abundance, in the order of his wiſdom, is deſtined only to ſupply their neceſſities; your authority, only to protect them; your dignities, only to avenge their intereſts; your rank only to conſole them by your good offices; whatſoever you be, you are it only for them; your elevation, would no longer be the work of God, and he would have curſed you, in beſtowing

flowing on you all the riches of the earth, had he given them to you for any other uſe.

Ah! alledge then no more to us, as an excuſe for your hardheartedneſs towards your brethren, wants which are condemned by the law of God; rather juſtify his providence towards all who ſuffer; by entering into his order, let them know, that there is a God for them, as well as for you; and make them bleſs the adorable deſigns of his wiſdom, in the diſpenſation of earthly things, which hath ſupplied them through your abundance, with ſuch reſources of conſolation.

But, beſides, what can the ſmall contributions required from you retrench from thoſe wants, the urgency of which you tell us ſo much? The Lord exacteth not from you any part of your poſſeſſions and heritages, though they belong wholly to him, and he hath a right to deſpoil you of them. He leaveth you tranquil poſſeſſors, of thoſe lands, of thoſe palaces, which diſtinguiſh you in your people, and with which the piety of your anceſtors formerly enriched our temples: He doth not command you, like the young man of the goſpel, to renounce all, to diſtribute your whole wealth among the poor, and to follow him: He maketh it not a law to you, as formerly to the firſt believers, to bring all your riches to the feet of your paſtors: He doth not ſtrike you with anathema, as formerly Ananias and Saphira, for daring to retain only a portion of that wealth which they had received from their anceſtors; you, who only owe the aggrandiſement of fortunes perhaps to public calamities, or other ſhameful means of acquirement: He conſenteth, that, as the prophet ſays, you ſhall call the land by your name; and that you tranſmit to your poſterity thoſe poſſeſſions which you have inherited from

from your anceſtors: He wiſheth, that you lay apart, only a portion for the unfortunate, whom he leaveth in indigence: He wiſheth, that while in the luxury and ſplendour of your apparel, you bear the nouriſhment of a whole people of unfortunate fellow-creatures, you have wherewith to cover the nakedneſs of his ſervants, who languiſh in poverty, and know not where to repoſe their head: He wiſheth, that from thoſe tables of voluptuouſneſs, where your great riches are ſcarcely ſufficient to ſupply your ſenſuality, and the profuſions of an extravagant delicacy, you drop at leaſt a portion, for the relief of the Lazaruſes preſſed with hunger and want: He wiſheth that, while paintings of the moſt abſurd and the moſt boundleſs price are ſeen to cover the walls of your palaces, your revenues may ſuffice to honour the living images of your God: He wiſheth, in a word, that, while nothing is ſpared towards the gratification of an inordinate paſſion for gaming, and every thing is on the verge of being for ever ſwallowed up in that gulph, you come not to calculate your expences, to meaſure your ability, to alledge to us the mediocrity of your fortune, and the embarraſſment of your affairs, when there is queſtion of conſoling an afflicted Chriſtian. He wiſheth it; and with reaſon doth he not wiſh it? What! You ſhall be rich for evil, and poor for good! Your revenues ſhall be amply ſufficient to effect your deſtruction, and they ſhall not ſuffice to ſave your ſoul and to purchaſe heaven? And, becauſe you carry ſelf-love to the extreme, every barbarity of heart ſhould be permitted you towards your unfortunate brethren?

But, whence comes it that, in this ſingle circumſtance, you wiſh to lower the opinion that the world has of your riches? On every other occaſion you wiſh to be thought powerful; you give yourſelves out as ſuch; you even frequently

frequently conceal, under appearances of the greateſt ſplendour, affairs already ruined, merely to ſupport the vain reputation of wealth. This vanity, then, does not abandon you but when you are put in remembrance of the duty of compaſſion; not ſatisfied, then, with confeſſing the mediocrity of your fortune, you exaggerate it, and ſordidneſs triumphs in your heart, not only over truth, but even over vanity. Ah! the Lord formerly reproached to the angel of the church of Sardis, "Becauſe thou ſayeſt, "I am rich, and increaſed with goods, and have need of "nothing; and knoweſt not that in my ſight thou art "wretched, and miſerable, and poor, and blind, and na-"ked." But, at preſent he ought, with regard to you, to change that reproach, and to ſay, "Oh! you complain that "you are poor and deſtitute of every thing, and you will "not ſee that you are rich and loaded with wealth; and "that, in times when almoſt all around you ſuffer, you "alone want for nothing in my ſight."

This is the ſecond pretext made uſe of in oppoſition to the duty of charity; the general poverty. Thus the diſciples reply, in the ſecond place, to our Saviour, as an excuſe for not aſſiſting the famiſhed multitude, that the place is deſert and barren, that it is now late, and that he ought to ſend away the people that they might go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themſelves bread, for they had nothing to eat. A freſh pretext they make uſe of to diſpenſe themſelves from compaſſion; the miſery of the times, the ſterility and irregularity of the ſeaſons.

But, *1ſtly*, Might not our Saviour have anſwered to the diſciples, as a holy father ſays, It is becauſe the place is barren and deſert, and that this people knows not where to

to find food to allay their hunger, that they ſhould not be ſent away faſting, leſt their ſtrength fail them by the way? And behold, my brethren, what I might alſo reply to you; the times are bad, the ſeaſons are unfavourable: Ah! for that very reaſon you ought to enter with a more feeling concern, with a more lively and tender anxiety, into the wants of your fellow-creatures. If the place be deſert and barren even for you, what muſt it be for ſo many unfortunate people? If you, with all your reſources, feel ſo much the miſery of the times, what muſt they not ſuffer, thoſe who are deſtitute of every comfort? If the plagues of Egypt obtrude even into the palaces of the great, and of Pharaoh, what muſt be the deſolation in the hut of the poor and of the labourer? If the princes of Iſrael, afflicted in Samaria, no longer find conſolation in their palaces, to what dreadful extremities muſt the common people not be reduced? Reduced, alas! perhaps like that unfortunate mother, not to nouriſh herſelf with the blood of her child, but to make her innocence and her ſoul the melancholy price of her neceſſity.

But, beſides, theſe evils with which we are afflicted, and of which you ſo loudly complain, are the puniſhment of your hardneſs towards the poor; God avengeth upon your poſſeſſions the iniquitous uſe to which you apply them; it is the cries and the groanings of the unfortunate whom you abandon which draw down the vengeance of Heaven upon your lands and territories. It is in theſe times, then, of public calamity, that you ought to haſten to appeaſe the anger of God, by the abundance of your charities; it is then that, more than ever, you ſhould intereſt the poor in your behalf. Alas! you bethink yourſelves, of addreſſing your general ſupplications to the Almighty, through theſe to obtain more favourable ſeaſons, the ceſſation

tion of public calamities, and the return of peace and abundance; but it is not there alone that your views and your prayers ought to be carried; you can never expect that the Almighty will attend to your diſtreſſes, while you remain callous to thoſe of your fellow-creatures; you have here on the earth the maſters of the winds and of the ſeaſons; addreſs yourſelves to the poor and the afflicted; it is they who have, as I may ſay, the keys of heaven; it is their prayers which regulate the times and ſeaſons; which bring back to us days of peace or of miſery; which arreſt or attract the bleſſings of heaven: for, abundance is given to the earth, only for their conſolation; and it is only on their account that the Almighty puniſheth, or is bountiful to you.

But, completely to confute you, my brethren, you who ſo ſtrongly alledge to us the evil of the times, does the pretended rigour of theſe times retrench any thing from your pleaſures? What do your paſſions ſuffer from the public calamities? If the misfortune of the times oblige you to retrench from your expences, begin with thoſe of which religion condemns the uſe; regulate your tables, your apparel, your amuſements, your followers, and your edifices, according to the goſpel; let your retrenchings in charity at leaſt only follow the others; leſſen your crimes before you begin to diminiſh from your duties. When the Almighty ſtrikes with ſterility, the kingdoms of the earth, it is his intention to deprive the great and the powerful of all occaſions of debauchery and exceſs; enter then into the order of his juſtice, and his wiſdom; conſider yourſelves as public criminals, whom the Lord chaſtiſeth by public puniſhments; ſay to him, like David, when he beheld the hand of the Lord weighing down his people, "Lo, I have ſinned, and have done wickedly; but theſe ſheep, what

what have they done? Let thine hand, I pray thee, be againſt me and againſt my father's houſe."

Behold your model; by terminating your diſorders, terminate the cauſe of the public evils; in the perſons of the poor, offer up to God the retrenchment of your pleaſures and of your profuſions, as the only righteous and acceptable ſacrifice which is capable of diſarming his anger; and ſeeing theſe ſcourges fall upon the earth, only in puniſhment of the abuſes which you have made of your abundance, bear you likewiſe, in leſſening theſe abuſes, their anguiſh and bitterneſs. But, that the public misfortunes ſhould be perceivable neither in the ſplendour and pride of your equipages, nor in the ſenſuality of your repaſts, nor in the magnificence of your palaces, nor in your rage for gaming and every criminal pleaſure, but ſolely in your inhumanity towards the poor; and that every thing abroad, the theatres, the profane aſſemblies of every deſcription, the public feſtivals, ſhould continue with the ſame vigour and animation, while charity alone ſhall be chilled; that luxury ſhould every day increaſe, while compaſſion alone ſhall diminiſh; that the world and Satan ſhould loſe nothing through the miſery of the times, while Jeſus Chriſt alone ſhould ſuffer in his afflicted members; that the rich, ſheltered in their opulence, ſhould ſee only from afar the anger of Heaven, while the poor and the innocent ſhall become the melancholy victims: Great God! thou wouldſt then overwhelm only the unfortunate, in ſending theſe ſcourges upon the earth! Thy ſole intention then ſhould be to complete the deſtruction of thoſe miſerable wretches, upon whom thy hand has already been ſo heavy in bringing them forth to penury and want. The powerful of Egypt ſhould alone be exempted by the exterminating angel, while thy whole wrath would fall upon the afflicted

afflicted Iſraelite, upon his poor and unprovided roof, and even marked with the blood of the Lamb. Yes, my brethren, the public calamities are deſtined to puniſh only the rich and powerful; and the rich and the powerful are thoſe who alone ſuffer not; on the contrary, the public evils, in multiplying the unfortunate, furniſh an additional pretext towards diſpenſing themſelves from the duty of compaſſion.

Laſt excuſe of the diſciples, founded on the great number of the people, who had followed our Saviour into the deſert: Theſe people are ſo numerous, ſaid they, that two hundred penny-worth of bread is not ſufficient for them, that every one may take a little. Laſt pretext, which they oppoſe to the duty of charity: The multitude of the poor, yes, my brethren, that which ought to excite and to animate charity, extinguiſhes it: the multitude of the unfortunate, hardens you to their wants: the more the duty increaſes, the more do you think yourſelves diſpenſed from its practice, and you become cruel, by having too many occaſions of being charitable.

But, in the firſt place, whence comes, I pray you, this multitude of poor, of which you ſo loudly complain? I know that the misfortune of the times may increaſe their number: but wars, peſtilences, and irregularity of ſeaſons, all of which we at preſent experience, have happened in all ages: the calamities we behold, are not unexampled; our forefathers have witneſſed them, and even much more melancholy and dreadful; civil diſſentions, the father armed againſt the child, the brother againſt brother; countries ravaged and laid waſte by their own inhabitants; the kingdom a prey to foreign enemies; no perſon in ſafety under his own roof: we ſee not theſe miſeries; but have

they ſeen what we witneſs? ſo many public, and conceal-ed miſeries? ſo many families worn out? ſo many citizens, formerly diſtinguiſhed, now low in the duſt, and confound-ed with the meaneſt of the people? Arts become almoſt uſeleſs? The image of hunger and death ſpread over the cities, and over the fields? What ſhall I ſay? So many hidden iniquities, brought every day to light, the dreadful conſequences of deſpair, and horrible neceſſity? Whence comes this, my brethren? Is it not from a luxury, unknown to our fathers, and which engluts every thing? from your expences, which know no bounds, and which neceſſarily drag along with them the extinction of charity?

Ah! was the primitive church not perſecuted, deſolated, and afflicted? Do the calamities of our age bear any compa-riſon with the horrors of thoſe times? Proſcription of pro-perty, exilement, and impriſonment were then daily; the moſt burdenſome charges of the ſtate, fell upon thoſe who were ſuſpected of Chriſtianity: in a word, ſo many cala-mities were never beheld; and nevertheleſs, there was no poor among them, ſays St Luke, nor any that lacked. Ah! It is, becauſe riches of ſimplicity, ſprung up even from their poverty itſelf, according to the expreſſion of the apoſ-tle; it is, becauſe they gave according to their means, and even beyond them: it is, becauſe the moſt diſtant provin-ces, through the care of the apoſtolic miniſters, flowed ſtreams of charity, for the conſolation of their afflicted brethren in Jeruſalem, more expoſed than the reſt to the rage and hatred of the ſynagogue.

But more than all that, it is, becauſe the moſt power-ful of the primitive believers were adorned with modeſty; and that our great riches are now ſcarcely ſufficient to ſup-port that monſtrous luxury, of which cuſtom has made a

!

law to us; it is, that their feſtivals were repaſts of ſobriety and charity; and that the holy abſtinence itſelf, which we celebrate, cannot moderate among us, the profuſions, and the exceſſes of the table, and of feaſts; it is, that having no fixed city here below, they did not exhauſt themſelves in forming brilliant eſtabliſhments, in order to render their names illuſtrious, to exalt their poſterity, and to ennoble their own obſcurity and meanneſs; they thought only of ſecuring to themſelves a better eſtabliſhment in the celeſtial country; and that at preſent no one is contented with his ſtation; every one wiſhes to mount higher than his anceſtors, and that their patrimony is only employed in buying titles and dignities, which may obliterate their name and the meanneſs of their origin: in a word, it is becauſe the frugality of theſe firſt believers conſtituted the whole wealth of their afflicted brethren, and that at preſent our profuſions occaſion all their poverty and want. It is our exceſſes then, my brethren, and our hardneſs of heart towards them, which multiply the number of the unfortunate: excuſe no more then, on that head, the failing of your charities; that would be making your guilt itſelf your excuſe. Ah! you complain that the poor overburden you; but they would have reaſon in retorting the charge one day againſt you: do not then accuſe them for your inſenſibility; and reproach them not, with that, which they undoubtedly ſhall one day reproach to you, before the tribunal of Jeſus Chriſt.

If each of you were, according to the advice of the apoſtle, to appropriate a certain portion of your wealth towards the ſubſiſtence of the poor; if, in the computation of your expences, and of your revenues, this article were to be always regarded as the moſt ſacred, and the moſt inviolable one: Then ſhould we quickly ſee the number of the afflicted to diminiſh:

diminiſh: We ſhould ſoon ſee renewed in the church, that peace, that happineſs, and that chearful equality, which reigned among the firſt Chriſtians; we ſhould no longer behold with ſorrow, that monſtrous diſproportion, which elevating the one, places him on the pinnacle of proſperity and opulence, while the other crawls on the ground, and groans in the gulph of poverty and affliction: no longer ſhould there be any unhappy, except the impious, among us; no ſecret miſeries, except thoſe which ſin operates in the ſoul; no tears, except thoſe of penitence; no ſighs, but for heaven; no poor, but thoſe bleſſed diſciples of the goſpel, who renounce all to follow their Maſter: Our cities would be the abode of innocence and compaſſion; religion, a commerce of charity; the earth, the image of heaven, where in different degrees of glory, each is equally happy; and the enemies of faith would again, as formerly, be forced to render glory to God, and to confeſs that there is ſomething of divine in religion which is capable of uniting men together in a manner ſo new.

But, in what the error here conſiſts, is, that in the practice, nobody conſiders charity as one of the moſt eſſential obligations of Chriſtianity: conſequently, they have no regulation on that point: if ſome bounty be beſtowed, it is always arbitrary; and however ſmall it be, they are equally ſatisfied with themſelves, as if they had even gone beyond their duty.

Beſides, when you pretend to excuſe the ſcantineſs of your charities, by ſaying that the number of the poor is endleſs; what do you believe to ſay? you ſay that your obligations, with reſpect to them, are become only more indiſpenſible; that your compaſſion ought to increaſe in proportion as their wants increaſe; and that you contract new debts, whenever

whenever any increaſe of fortune takes place on the earth. It is then, my brethren, it is during theſe public calamities, that you ought to retrench even from expences, which at any other period might be permitted, and which might even be proper; it is then, that you ought to conſider yourſelves but as the principal poor, and to take as a charity whatever you take for yourſelves? it is then that you are no longer, either grandee, man in office, diſtinguiſhed citizen, or woman of illuſtrious birth; you are ſimply believer, member of Jeſus Chriſt, brother of every afflicted Chriſtian.

And ſurely, ſay: while that cities and provinces are ſtruck with every calamity; that men created after the image of God, and redeemed with his whole blood, browſe like the animal, and through their neceſſity go to ſearch in the fields a food which nature has not intended for man, and which to them becomes a food of death; would you have the reſolution to be the only one exempted from the general evil? While the face of a whole kingdom is changed, and that cries and lamentations alone are heard around your ſuperb dwelling; would you preſerve within the ſame appearance of happineſs, pomp, tranquillity, and opulence? And where, then, would be humanity, reaſon, religion? In a pagan republic*, you would be held as a bad citizen; in a ſociety of ſages, and worldly as a foul, vile, ſordid, without nobility, without generoſity, and without elevation; and in the church of Jeſus Chriſt, in what light, think you, can you be held? Oh! As a monſter, unworthy of the name of Chriſtian which you bear, of that faith, in which you glorify yourſelf, of the ſacrament which you approach, and even of entry into our temples where you

* "This diſcourſe was pronounced in 1709, when France was almoſt de-"ſolated by war, peſtilence, and famine."

you come, ſeeing all theſe are the ſacred ſymbols of that union, which ought to exiſt among believers.

Nevertheleſs, the hand of the Lord is extended over our people, in the cities and in the provinces; you know it, and you lament it: Heaven is deaf to the cries of this afflicted kingdom; wretchedneſs, poverty, deſolation, and death, walk every where before us. Now, do any of thoſe exceſſes of charity become at preſent a law of prudence and juſtice, eſcape you? Do you take upon yourſelves any part of the calamities of your brethren? What ſhall I ſay? Do you not perhaps take advantage of the public miſery? Do you not perhaps turn the general poverty to a barbarous profit? Do you not perhaps complete the ſtripping of the unfortunate, in affecting to hold out to them an aſſiſting hand? And, are you unacquainted with the inhuman art, of deriving individual profit, even from the tears and the neceſſities of your brethren? Bowels of iron, when you ſhall be filled, you ſhall burſt aſunder; your felicity itſelf ſhall conſtitute your puniſhment, and the Lord will ſhower down upon you his war and his wrath.

My brethren, how dreadful ſhall be the preſence of the poor before the tribunal of Jeſus Chriſt, to the greateſt part of the rich in this world! How powerful ſhall be theſe accuſers! And how little ſhall remain for you to ſay, when they ſhall reproach to you the ſcantineſs of the ſuccour which was required to ſoften and to relieve their wants: that a ſingle day, cut off from your profuſions, would have ſufficed to remedy the indigence of one of their years; that it was their own property which you withheld, ſince whatever you had, beyond a ſufficiency, belonged to them; that conſequently, you have not only been cruel,

but

but alſo unjuſt, in refuſing it to them; but that, after all, your hardheartedneſs has ſerved only to exerciſe their patience, and to render them more worthy of immortality, while you, forever deprived of thoſe riches, which you were unwilling to lodge in ſafety in the boſom of the poor, ſhall receive for your portion only the curſe prepared for thoſe who ſhall have ſeen Jeſus Chriſt ſuffering hunger, thirſt, and nakedneſs in his members, and ſhall not have relieved him. Such is the illuſion of the pretexts employed to diſpenſe themſelves from the duty of charity; let us now determine the rules to be obſerved, in fulfilling it; and, after having defended this obligation againſt all the vain excuſes of avarice, let us endeavour to ſave it from even the defects of charity.

PART II. Not to ſound the trumpet in order to attract the public attention in the compaſſionate offices which we render to our brethren; to obſerve an order even of juſtice in charity, and not to prefer the wants of ſtrangers to thoſe with whom we are connected; to appear feeling for the misfortune, and to know how to ſooth the afflicted by our tenderneſs and affability, as well as by our bounty; in a word, to find out, by our vigilance and attention, the ſecret of their ſhame; behold the rules which the preſent example of our Saviour preſcribes to us in the practice of compaſſion.

Firſtly, He went up into a deſert and hidden place, ſays the goſpel; he aſcended a mountain, where he ſeated himſelf with his diſciples. His deſign, according to the holy interpreters, was to conceal from the eyes of the neighbouring villages the miracle of multiplying the loaves, and to have no witneſſes of his compaſſion except thoſe who were

were to reap the fruits of it. Firſt inſtruction, and firſt rule; the ſecrecy of charity.

Yes, my brethren, how may fruits of compaſſion are every day blaſted in the ſight of God, by the ſcorching wind of pride and vain oſtentation! How many charities loſt for eternity! How many treaſures, which were believed to have been ſafely lodged in the boſom of the poor, and which ſhall one day appear corrupted with vermin, and conſumed with ruſt!

In truth, thoſe groſs and bare-faced hypocrites are rare which openly vaunt to the world the merit of their pious exertions; pride is more cunning, and it never altogether unmaſks itſelf; but, how diminutive is the number of thoſe who, moved with the true zeal of charity, like our Saviour, ſeek out ſolitary and private places to beſtow, and, at the ſame, to conceal their holy gifts! We now ſee only that oſtentatious zeal, which nothing but neceſſities of eclat can intereſt, and which piouſly wiſhes to make the public acquainted with every gift; they will ſometimes, it is true, adopt meaſures to conceal them, but they are not ſorry when an indiſcretion betrays them; they will not perhaps court the public attention, but they are delighted when the public attention ſurpriſes them, and they almoſt conſider as loſt any liberality which remains concealed.

Alas! our temples and our altars, are they not every where marked with the gifts and with the names of their benefactors; that is to ſay, are they not the public monuments of our forefathers and our own vanity? If the inviſible eye of the heavenly Father alone was meant to have witneſſed them, to what purpoſe all that vain oſtentation? Are

Are you afraid that the Lord forget your offerings? If you wiſh only to pleaſe him, why expoſe your gifts to any other eye? Why theſe titles and theſe inſcriptions which immortaliſe, on ſacred walls, your gifts and your pride? Was it not ſufficient that they were written even by the hand of God in the book of life? Why engrave on a periſhable marble the merit of a deed, which charity would have rendered immortal?

Solomon, after having completed the moſt ſuperb and the moſt magnificent temple of which the earth could ever boaſt, engraved the awful name of the Lord alone upon it, without preſuming to mingle any memorial of the grandeur of his race with thoſe of the eternal majeſty of the King of kings. We give an appellation of piety to this cuſtom; it is thought that theſe public monuments excite the liberality of believers. But the Lord, hath he charged your vanity with the care of attracting gifts to his altars? And hath he permitted you to depart from modeſty in order to make your brethren more charitable? Alas! the moſt powerful among the primitive believers carried humbly, as the moſt obſcure, their patrimony to the feet of the apoſtles: They beheld with an holy joy their names and their wealth confounded among thoſe of their brethren who had leſs than they to offer; they were not then diſtinguiſhed in the aſſembly of the faithful in proportion to their gifts; honours and precedency were not yet the price of gifts and offerings, and they knew better than to exchange the eternal recompence which they awaited from the Lord for any frivolous glory they could receive from men: and now the church has not privileges enough to ſatisfy the vanity of her benefactors; their places are marked out in the ſanctuary; their tombs appear even under the altar, where only the

aſhes of martyrs ſhould repoſe. Cuſtom, it is true, authoriſes this abuſe; but cuſtom does not always juſtify what it authoriſes.

Charity, my brethren, is that ſweet-ſmelling ſavour of Jeſus Chriſt which vaniſhes, and is extinguiſhed from the moment that it is expoſed. I mean not that public acts of compaſſion are to be refrained from: We owe the edification and example of them to our brethren; it is proper that they ſee our works; but we ought not ourſelves to ſee them, and our left hand ſhould be ignorant of what our right beſtows; even thoſe actions which duty renders the moſt ſhining ought always to be hidden in the preparation of the heart; we ought to entertain a kind of jealouſy of the public view on their account, and to believe their purity in ſafety only when they are expoſed to the eyes of God alone. Yes, my brethren, thoſe liberalities which have flowed moſtly in ſecret reach the boſom of God much more pure than others, which, even contrary to our wiſhes, having been expoſed to the eyes of men, become troubled and defiled, as I may ſay, in their courſe, by the inevitable flatteries of ſelf-love, and by the applauſes of the beholders; like thoſe rivers which have flowed moſtly under ground, and which pour their ſtreams into the ocean pure, and undefiled, while, on the contrary, thoſe which have traverſed plains and countries, expoſed to the day, carry there, in general, only muddy waters, and drag along with them the wrecks, carcaſſes, and ſlime, which they have amaſſed in their courſe. Behold, then, the firſt rule of charity which our Saviour here lays down; to ſhun ſhew and oſtentation in all works of compaſſion; to be unwilling to have your name mentioned in them, either on account of the rank which you may there hold, or from the glory of

of having been the firſt promoter, or from the noiſe which they may make in the world, and not to loſe upon the earth that which charity had amaſſed only for heaven.

The ſecond circumſtance which I remark in our goſpel is, that no one of all the multitude who preſent themſelves to Jeſus Chriſt is rejected; all are indiſcriminately relieved; and we do not read that, with regard to them, our Saviour hath uſed any diſtinction or preference. Second rule: charity is univerſal; it baniſhes thoſe capricious liberalities which ſeem to open the heart to certain wants, only in order to ſhut it againſt all others. You find perſons in the world who, under the pretexts of having ſtated charities and places deſtined to receive them, are callous to all other wants. In vain would you inform them that a family is on the brink of ruin, and that a very ſmall aſſiſtance would extricate it; that a young perſon hangs over a precipice, and muſt neceſſarily periſh, if ſome friendly and aſſiſting hand be not held out; that a meritorious and uſeful eſtabliſhment muſt fail, if not ſupported by a renewal of charity; theſe are not neceſſities after their taſte; and in placing elſewhere ſome trifling bounties, they imagine to have purchaſed the right of viewing with a dry eye and an indifferent heart every other deſcription of miſery.

I know that charity hath its order and its meaſure; that in its practice it ought to uſe a proper diſtinction; that juſtice requires a preference to certain wants; but I would not have that methodical charity, if I may thus ſpeak, which, to a point, knows where to ſtop; which has its days, its places, its perſons, and its limits; which, beyond theſe, is cruel, and can ſettle with itſelf, to be affected only in certain times and by certain wants. Ah! are we thus maſters of our hearts when we truly love our brethren? Can we

we at our will, mark out to ourſelves the moments of warmth and of indifference? Charity, that holy love, is it ſo regular when it truly inflames the heart? Has it not, if I may ſay ſo, its tranſports and its exceſſes? And do not occaſions ſometimes occur ſo truly affecting, that did but a ſingle ſpark of charity exiſt in your heart, it would ſhew itſelf, and in the inſtant would open your bowels of compaſſion and your riches to your brother?

I would not have that rigidly circumſpect charity, which is never done with its ſcrutiny and which always miſtruſts the truth of the neceſſities laid open to it. See if in that multitude which our Saviour filleth, he apply himſelf to ſeparate thoſe whom idleneſs or the ſole hope of corporeal nouriſhment had perhaps attracted to the deſert, and who might ſtill have had ſufficient ſtrength left to go and ſearch for food in the neighbouring villages; no one is excepted from his divine bounty. Is the being reduced to feign wretchedneſs not a ſufficient miſery of itſelf? Is it not preferable to aſſiſt fictitious wants, rather than to run the riſk of refuſing to real and melancholy objects of compaſſion? When an impoſtor ſhould even deceive your charity, where is the loſs? Is it not always Jeſus Chriſt who receives it from your hand? And is your recompenſe attached to the abuſe which may be made of your bounty, or to the intention itſelf which beſtows it?

From this rule there ſprings a third, laid down in the hiſtory of our goſpel, at the ſame time with the other two; it is, that not only ought charity to be univerſal, but likewiſe mild, affable, and compaſſionate. Jeſus Chriſt beholding theſe people wandering and unprovided at the foot of the mountain, is touched with compaſſion; he is affected at the ſight, and the wants of the multitude awaken his

his tenderneſs and pity. Third rule: the gentleneſs of charity.

We often accompany pity with ſo much aſperity towards the unfortunate, while ſtretching out to them an helping hand; we look upon them with ſo ſour and ſo ſevere a countenance, that a ſimple denial had been leſs galling to them than a charity ſo harſhly and ſo unfeelingly beſtowed; for the pity which appears affected by our misfortunes, conſoles them almoſt as much as the bounty which relieves them. We reproach to them their ſtrength, their idleneſs, their wandering and vagabond manners; we accuſe their own conduct for their indigence and wretchedneſs; and, in ſuccouring, we purchaſe the right of inſulting them. But, were the unhappy creature whom you outrage permitted to reply; if the abjectneſs of his ſituation had not put the check of ſhame and reſpect upon his tongue; what do you reproach to me would he ſay? An idle life, and uſeleſs and vagabond manners. But what are the cares which in your opulence engroſs you? The cares of ambition, the anxieties of fortune, the impulſes of the paſſions, the refinements of voluptuouſneſs: I may be an unprofitable ſervant, but are you not yourſelf an unfaithful one? Ah! if the moſt culpable were always to be the pooreſt and the moſt unfortunate in this world, would your lot be ſuperior to mine? You reproach me with a ſtrength which I apply to no purpoſe, but to what uſe do you apply your own? Becauſe I work not I ought not to have food; but are you diſpenſed yourſelf from that law? Are you rich merely that you may paſs your life in a ſhameful effeminacy and ſloth? Ah! the Lord will judge betwixt you and me; and before his awful tribunal it ſhall be ſeen whether your voluptuouſneſs and profuſions were more allowable

lowable in you than the innocent artifice which I employ to attract aſſiſtance to my ſufferings.

Yes, my brethren, let us at leaſt offer to the unfortunate, hearts feeling for their wants; if the mediocrity of our fortune permit us not altogether to relieve our indigent fellow-creatures, let us, by our humanity, at leaſt ſoften the yoke of poverty. Alas! we give tears to the chimerical adventures of a theatrical perſonage; we honour fictitious misfortunes with real ſenſibility; we depart from a repreſentation with hearts ſtill moved for the diſaſters of a fabulous hero; and a member of Jeſus Chriſt, an inheritor of heaven, and your brother, whom you encounter in your way from thence, perhaps ſinking under diſeaſe and penury, and who wiſhes to inform you of the exceſs of his ſufferings, finds you callous! And you turn your eyes with diſguſt from that ſpectacle, and deign not to liſten to him? And you quit him even with a rudeneſs and brutality, which finiſh to wring his heart with ſorrow? Inhuman ſoul! have you then left all your ſenſibility on an infamous theatre? Doth the ſpectacle of Jeſus Chriſt ſuffering in one of his members offer nothing worthy of your pity? And that your heart may be touched, muſt the ambition, the revenge, the voluptuouſneſs, and all the other horrors of the pagan ages be revived?

But, it is not enough that we offer hearts feeling for the diſtreſſes, which preſent themſelves to our view; charity goes farther: it does not indolently await thoſe occaſions, which chance may throw in its way; it knows how to ſearch them out, and even to anticipate them itſelf. Laſt rule; the vigilance of charity. Jeſus Chriſt waits not till thoſe poor people addreſs themſelves to him, and lay open their

their wants; He is the firſt to diſcover them; ſcarcely has he found them out, when with Philip, he ſearches the means of relieving them. That charity, which is not vigilant, anxious after the calamities of which it is yet ignorant, ingenious in diſcovering thoſe which endeavour to remain concealed, which require to be ſolicited, preſſed, and even importuned, reſembles not the charity of Jeſus Chriſt; we muſt watch, and penetrate the obſcurity, which ſhame oppoſes to our bounties; this is not a ſimple advice; it is the conſequence of the precept of charity. The paſtors, who, according to faith, are the fathers of the people, are obliged to watch over their ſpiritual concerns; and that is one of the moſt eſſential functions of their miniſtry; the rich and the powerful are eſtabliſhed by God, the fathers and the paſtors of the poor, according to the body; They are bound then to watch continually over their neceſſities: if, through want of vigilance, they eſcape their attention, they are guilty before God of all the conſequences, which a ſmall ſuccour in time would have prevented.

It is not, that you are required to find out all the ſecret neceſſities of a city; but care and attention are exacted of you; it is required, that you, who, through your wealth or birth, hold the firſt rank in a department, ſhall not be ſurrounded, unknown to you, with thouſands of unfortunate fellow-creatures, who pine in ſecret, and whoſe eyes are continually wounded with the pomp of your train, and who, beſides their wretchedneſs, ſuffer again, as I may ſay, in your proſperity; It is required, that you, who, amid all the pleaſures of the court, or of the city, ſee flowing into your hands, the fruits of the ſweat and of the labour of ſo many unfortunate people, who inhabit your lands and your fields; it is required, that you be acquainted with thoſe, whom the toils of induſtry and of age have exhauſted, and who,

who, in their humble dwellings, drag on the wretched remains of dotage and poverty; thoſe whom a languiſhing health, renders incapable of labour, their only reſource againſt indigence and want; thoſe whom ſex and age expoſed to ſeduction, and whoſe innocence you might have been enabled to preſerve. Behold what is required, and what with every right of juſtice is exacted from you; behold the poor with whom the Lord hath charged you, and for whom you ſhall anſwer to him; the poor, whom he leaveth on the earth, only for your ſake, and to whom his providence hath aſſigned no other reſource, than your wealth, and your bounty.

Now, are they even known to you? Do you charge their paſtors, to make them known to you? Are theſe the cares which occupy you, when you ſhew yourſelf in the midſt of your lands and poſſeſſions? Ah! It is with cruelty to ſcrew your claims from the hands of theſe unfortunate people; it is to tear from their bowels the innocent price of their toil, without regard to their want, to the miſery of the times which you alledge to us, to their tears, and often to their deſpair: What ſhall I ſay? It is perhaps to cruſh down their weakneſs, to be their tyrant, and not their Lord and their father. O God! Curſeſt thou not, theſe cruel generations, and theſe riches of iniquity? Doſt thou not ſtamp upon them the marks of misfortune and deſolation, and which ſhall ſoon blaſt the ſource of their families; which wither the root of a proud poſterity: which produce domeſtic diſcord, public diſgraces, the fall and total extinction of houſes? Alas! We are ſometimes aſtoniſhed to ſee fortunes apparently the beſt eſtabliſhed, go to wreck in an inſtant; thoſe ancient, and formerly ſo illuſtrious names fallen into obſcurity, no longer to offer to our view, but the melancholy wrecks of their ancient ſplendour;

ſplendour; and their eſtates become the property of their rivals, or perhaps of their own ſervants. Ah! Could we inveſtigate the ſource of their misfortunes; if their aſhes, and the pompous wrecks, which in the pride of their monuments remain to us of their glory, could ſpeak: Do you ſee, they would ſay to us, theſe ſad marks of our grandeur! It is the tears of the poor whom we neglected, whom we oppreſſed, which have gradually ſapped, and at laſt have totally overthrown them; their cries have drawn down the thunder of heaven upon our palaces: The Lord hath blown upon our ſuperb edifices, and upon our fortune, and hath diſſipated them like duſt: let the name of the poor be honourable in thy ſight, if you wiſh that your names may never periſh in the memory of men: let compaſſion ſuſtain your houſes, if you wiſh that your poſterity be not buried under their ruins: become wiſe at our coſt; and let our misfortunes in teaching you our faults, teach you alſo to ſhun them.

And behold, my brethren, (that I may ſay ſomething reſpecting it, before I conclude,) the firſt advantage of Chriſtian charity; bleſſings even in this world. The bread bleſſed by our Saviour, multiplies in the hands of the Apoſtles who diſtribute it; five thouſand are ſatisfied; and twelve baſkets can hardly contain the remnants gathered up: that is to ſay, that the gifts of charity, are riches of benediction, which multiply in proportion as they are diſtributed, and which bear along with them into our houſes, a ſource of happineſs and abundance. Yes, my brethren, charity is a gain; it is an holy uſury; it is a principle which returns, even here below, an hundred fold. You ſometimes complain of a fatality in your affairs; nothing ſucceeds with you; Men deceive you; rivals ſupplant you; Maſters neglect you; the elements conſpire againſt you:

the beſt concerted ſchemes are blaſted: aſſociate with you the poor; divide with them the increaſe of your fortune: in proportion as your proſperity augments, do you augment your benefactions; flouriſh for them as well as for yourſelf: God himſelf ſhall then be intereſted in your ſucceſs; you ſhall have found out the ſecret of engaging him in your fortune, and he will preſerve; what do I ſay? He will bleſs, he will multiply riches, in which He ſees blended the portion of his afflicted members.

This is a truth, confirmed by the experience of all ages; charitable families are continually ſeen to proſper: a watchful Providence preſides over all their affairs; where others are ruined, they become rich: they are ſeen to flouriſh, but the ſecret canal is not perceived, which pours in upon them their property: they are the fleeces of Gideon, covered with the dew of Heaven, while all around is barren and dry.

Such is the firſt advantage of compaſſion, I ſay nothing even of the pleaſure, which we ought to feel in the delightful taſk of ſoothing thoſe who ſuffer, in making a fellow-creature happy, in reigning over hearts, and in attracting upon ourſelves, the innocent tribute of their acclamations and their thanks. O! were we to reap but the pleaſure of beſtowing, would it not be an ample recompenſe to a worthy heart? What has even the majeſty of the throne more delicious, than the power of diſpenſing favours? Would princes be much attached to their grandeur, and to their power, were they condemned to a ſolitary enjoyment of them? No, my brethren, make your riches as ſubſervient as you will, to your pleaſures, to your profuſions, and to your caprices; but never will you employ them in a way which ſhall leave a joy ſo pure, and ſo worthy of the heart, as in that of comforting the unfortunate.

What

What indeed can be more grateful to the heart, than the confidence, that there is not a moment in the day, in which ſome afflicted ſouls are not raiſing up their hands to Heaven for us, and bleſſing the day which gave us birth? Hear that multitude whom Jeſus Chriſt hath filled; the air reſounds with their bleſſings and thanks; they ſay to themſelves, this is a prophet; they wiſh to eſtabliſh him their king. Ah! Were men to chooſe their maſters, it would neither be the moſt noble, nor the moſt valiant; it would be the moſt compaſſionate, the moſt humane, the moſt charitable, the moſt feeling: maſters who, at the ſame time, would be their fathers.

Laſtly, I do not add that Chriſtian charity aſſiſts in expiating the crimes of abundance; and that it is almoſt the only mean of ſalvation which Providence hath provided for you, you are born to proſperity. Were charity inſufficient to redeem our offences, we might certainly think ourſelves entitled to complain, ſays a holy Father; we might take it ill, that God had deprived men of ſo eaſy a mean of ſalvation; at leaſt might we ſay that, could we but open the gates of Heaven, through the means of riches, and purchaſe with our whole wealth the glory of the holy, we then ſhould be happy. Well, my brethren, continues the holy Father, profit by this privilege, ſeeing it is granted to you; haſten before your riches moulder away, to depoſit them in the boſom of the poor, as the price of the kingdom of heaven: the malice of men might perhaps have deprived you of them; your paſſions might have perhaps ſwallowed them up; the turns of fortune might have transferred them to other hands; death, at laſt, would ſooner or later have ſeparated you from them: ah! charity alone depoſits them beyond the reach of all theſe accidents; it renders you their everlaſting poſſeſſor; it lodges them

them in ſafety in the eternal tabernacles, and gives you the right of for ever enjoying them in the boſom of God himſelf.

Are you not happy in being able to aſſure to yourſelf admittance into heaven by means ſo eaſy? In being able, by clothing the naked, to efface from the book of divine juſtice the obſcenities, the luxury, and the irregularities of your younger years? In being able, by filling the hungry, to repair all the ſenſualities of your life? Laſtly, in being able, by ſheltering innocence in the aſylums of compaſſion, to blot out from the remembrance of God the ruin of ſo many ſouls, to whom you have been a ſtumbling block? Great God! what goodneſs to man, to conſider as meritorious a virtue which coſts ſo little to the heart! To number in our favour feelings of humanity, of which we could never diveſt ourſelves without being, at the ſame, diveſted of our nature; to be willing to accept as the price of an eternal kingdom frail riches, which we even enjoy only through thy bounty; which we could never continue to poſſeſs, and from which, after a momentary and fleeting enjoyment, we muſt at laſt be ſeparated! Nevertheleſs, mercy is promiſed to him who ſhall have ſhewn it; a ſinner ſtill feeling to the calamities of his brethren will not continue long inſenſible to the inſpirations of heaven; grace ſtill reſerves claims upon a heart in which charity has not altogether loſt its influence; a good heart cannot long continue an hardened one; that principle of humanity alone, which operates in rendering the heart feeling for the wants of others, is a preparation, as it were, for penitence and ſalvation; and while charity ſtill acts in the heart, an happy converſion is never to be deſpaired. Love then the poor as your brethren; cheriſh them as your offſpring; reſpect them as Jeſus Chriſt himſelf, in order that he

he ſay to you on the great day, " Come ye bleſſed of my " Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the " foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, and " ye gave me meat; I was thirſty, and ye gave me drink: " I was a ſtranger, and ye took me in; I was naked, and " ye clothed me; I was ſick, and ye viſited me: For in- " aſmuch as ye have done it unto one of the leaſt of theſe " my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

SERMON

SERMON XII.

ON AFFLICTIONS.

MATTHEW ii. 6.

And bleſſed is he, whoſoever ſhall not be offended in me.

IT is a bleſſing, and a rare bleſſing, then, not to be offended in Jeſus Chriſt. But what was there, or what could there be in him, who is the wiſdom itſelf, and the glory of the Father, the ſubſtantial image of all perfection, which could give ſubject of ſcandal to men? His croſs, my deareſt brethren, which was formerly the ſhame of the jews, and is, and ſhall be, to the end of ages, the ſhame of the greateſt part of Chriſtians. But when I ſay that the croſs of the Saviour is the ſhame of moſt of Chriſtians, I mean not only the croſs that he bore, I mean more eſpecially that which we are obliged, from his example, to bear; without which he rejects us as his diſciples, and denies us any participation of that glory into which he has entered, through the croſs alone.

Behold what diſpleaſes us, and what we find to complain of in our divine Saviour. We would wiſh, that ſince he was to ſuffer, his ſufferings had been a title, as it were, of exemption, which had merited to us the privilege of not ſuffering with him. Let us diſpel this error, my deareſt brethren;

brethren: the only thing which depends on us, is that of rendering our ſufferings meritorious; but to ſuffer, or not to ſuffer, is not left to our choice. Providence has ſo wiſely diſpenſed the good and evil of this life, that each in his ſtation, however happy his lot may appear, finds croſſes and afflictions, which always counterbalance the pleaſures of it. There is no perfect happineſs on the earth, for it is not here the time of conſolations, but the time of ſufferance. Grandeur hath its ſubjections and its diſquiets; obſcurity its humiliations and its ſcorns; the world, its cares and its caprices; retirement, its ſadneſs and wearineſs; marriage, its antipathies and its frenzies; friendſhip, its loſſes or its perfidies; piety itſelf, its repugnances and its diſguſts: in a word, by a deſtiny inevitable to the children of Adam, each one finds his own path ſtrewed with brambles and thorns. The apparently happieſt condition hath its ſecret ſorrows, which empoiſon all its felicity: the throne is the ſeat of chagrins equally as the loweſt place; ſuperb palaces conceal the cruelleſt diſcontents, equally as the hut of the poor and of the humble labourer; and, leſt our place of exile ſhould become endeared to us, we always feel, in a thouſand different ways, that ſomething is yet wanting to our happineſs.

Nevertheleſs, deſtined to ſuffer, we cannot love the ſufferances; continually ſtricken with ſome affliction, we are unable to make a merit of our pains; never happy, our croſſes become neceſſary, cannot at leaſt become uſeful to us. We are ingenious in depriving ourſelves of all the merit of our ſufferances. One while we ſeek, in the weakneſs of our own heart, the excuſe of our peeviſhneſs and of our murmurings; another in the exceſs or in the nature of our afflictions; and again, in the obſtacles which they ſeem to us to caſt in the way of our ſalvation; that is

to

to ſay, one while we complain of being too weak to bear our ſufferings with patience; another, that they are too exceſſive; and laſtly, that it is impoſſible in that ſituation to pay attention to ſalvation.

Such are the three pretexts continually oppoſed in the world to the Chriſtian uſe of affliction: the pretext of ſelf-weakneſs; the pretext of the exceſs or the nature of our afflictions; the pretext of the obſtacles which they ſeem to place in the way of our ſalvation. Theſe are the pretexts we have now to overthrow, by oppoſing to them the rules of faith. Attend then, be whom ye may, and learn that the cauſe of condemnation to moſt men is not pleaſures alone: Alas! they are ſo rare on the earth, and ſo narrowly followed by diſguſt! it is likewiſe the unchriſtian uſe they make of afflictions.

PART I. The language moſt common to the ſouls afflicted by the Lord, is that of alledging their own weakneſs, in order to juſtify the unchriſtian uſe they make of their afflictions. They complain that they are not endowed with a force of mind ſufficient to preſerve under them a ſubmiſſive and a patient heart; that nothing is more conducive to happineſs than the want of feeling; that this character ſaves us endleſs vexations and chagrins inevitable in life; but that we cannot faſhion to ourſelves an heart according to our own wiſhes; that religion doth not render unfeeling and ſtoical thoſe who are born with the tender feelings of humanity, and that the Lord is too juſt to make a crime to us even of our misfortunes.

But, to overthrow an alluſion ſo common and ſo unworthy of piety, remark, in the firſt place, that when Jeſus Chriſt hath commanded to all believers to bear with ſubmiſſion

ſubmiſſion and with love the croſſes propoſed for us by his goodneſs, he hath not added, that an order ſo juſt, ſo conſoling, ſo conformable to his examples, ſhould concern only the unfeeling and impatient ſouls. He hath not diſtinguiſhed among his diſciples, thoſe whom nature, pride, or reflection had rendered firmer and more conſtant, from thoſe whom tenderneſs and humanity had endowed with more feeling, in order to make a duty to the firſt of a patience and inſenſibility which coſt them almoſt nothing, and to excuſe the others to whom they become more difficult.

On the contrary, his divine precepts are cures; and the more we are inimical to them through the character of our heart, the more are they proper for, and become neceſſary to us. It is becauſe you are weak, and that the leaſt contradictions always excite you ſo much againſt ſufferances, that the Lord muſt purify you by tribulations and ſorrows; for it is not the ſtrong who have occaſion to be tried, it is the weak,

In effect, what is it to be weak and repining? It is an exceſſive ſelf-love; it is to give all to nature and nothing to faith; it is to give way to every impulſe of inclination, and to live ſolely for eaſe and ſelf-enjoyment, as conſtituting the chief happineſs of man. Now, in this ſituation, and with this exceſſive fund of love for the world and for yourſelf, if the Lord were not to provide afflictions for your weakneſs; if he did not ſtrike your body with an habitual langour, which renders the world inſipid to you, if he did not ſend loſſes and vexations, which force you, through decency, to regularity and retirement; if he did not overthrow certain projects, which, leaving your fortune more obſcure, remove you from the great dangers; if he did not place you in certain ſituations,

where irkſome and inevitable duties employ your beſt days; in a word, if he did not place betwixt your weakneſs and you a barrier which checks and ſtops you, alas! your innocence would ſoon be wrecked; you would ſoon make an improper and fatal uſe of peace and proſperity; you who find no ſecurity even amid afflictions and troubles. And, ſeeing that, afflicted and ſeparated from the world, and from pleaſures, you cannot return to God, what would it be did a more happy ſituation leave you no other check to your deſires than yourſelf? The ſame weakneſs and the ſame load of ſelf-love, which render us ſo feeling to ſorrow and affliction, would render us ſtill more ſo to the dangerous impreſſions of pleaſures and of human proſperities.

Thus, it is no excuſe for our deſpondency and murmurs, to confeſs that we are weak and little calculated to ſupport the ſtrokes with which we are afflicted by God. The weakneſs of our heart proceeds only from the weakneſs of our faith; a Chriſtian ſoul ought to be a valiant ſoul, ſuperior, ſays the apoſtle, to perſecution, diſgrace, infirmities, and even death. He may be oppreſſed, continues the apoſtle, but he cannot be vanquiſhed; he may be deſpoiled of his wealth, reputation, eaſe, and even life, but he cannot be robbed of that treaſure of faith and of grace which he has locked up in his heart, and which amply conſoles him for all theſe fleeting and frivolous loſſes. He may be brought to ſhed tears of ſenſibility and of ſorrow, for religion does not extinguiſh the feelings of nature; but his heart immediately diſavows its weakneſs, and turns its carnal tears into tears of penitence and of piety. What do I ſay? A Chriſtian ſoul even delights in tribulations; he conſiders them as proofs of the tender watchfulneſs of God over him, as the precious pledge of the promiſes to come, as the bleſſed features of reſemblance to Jeſus Chriſt,

Chriſt, and which give him an aſſured right to ſhare after this life in his immortal glory. To be weak and rebellious againſt the order of God under ſufferance, is to have loſt faith, and to be no longer Chriſtian.

I confeſs that there are hearts more tender and more feeling to ſorrow than others; but that ſenſibility is left to them only to increaſe the merit of their ſufferings, and not to excuſe their impatience and murmurings. It is not the feeling, it is the immoderate uſe of ſorrow which the goſpel condemns. In proportion as we are born feeling for our afflictions, ſo ought we to be ſo to the conſolations of faith. The ſame ſenſibility which renders our heart ſuſceptible of chagrin, ſhould open it to grace, which ſooths and ſupports it. A good heart has many more reſources againſt afflictions, in conſequence of grace finding eaſier acceſs to it; immoderate grief is rather the conſequence of paſſion than of the goodneſs of the heart; and to be unable to ſubmit to God, or to taſte conſolation in our troubles, is to be not tender and feeling, but intractable and deſperate.

Moreover, all the precepts of the goſpel require ſtrength, and if you have not enough to ſupport with ſubmiſſion the croſſes with which the Lord pleaſeth to afflict you, you muſt equally want ſufficient for the obſervance of the other duties preſcribed to you by the doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt. It requires ſtrength of mind to forgive an injury; to ſpeak well of thoſe who traduce us; to conceal the faults of thoſe who wiſh to diſhonour even our virtues. It requires fortitude to be enabled to fly from a world which is agreeable to us; to tear ourſelves from pleaſures towards which we are impelled by all our inclinations; to reſiſt examples authoriſed by the multitude, and of which cuſtom has now almoſt

almoſt eſtabliſhed a law. Strength of mind is required to make a Chriſtian uſe of proſperity; to be humble in exaltation, mortified in abundance, poor of heart amidſt periſhable riches, detached from all when poſſeſſed of all, and filled with deſires for heaven amidſt all the pleaſures and felicities of the earth. It is required to be able to conquer ourſelves; to repreſs a riſing deſire; to ſtifle an agreeable feeling; to recal to order an heart which is inceſſantly ſtraying from it. Laſtly, among all the precepts of the goſpel, there is not one which does not ſuppoſe a firm and noble ſoul; every where ſelf-denial is required; every where the kingdom of God is a field to be brought into cultivation, a vineyard where toil and the heat of the day muſt be endured, a career in which continual and valiant combating is required; in a word, the diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt can never be weak without being overcome; and every thing, even to the ſmalleſt obligations of faith, requires exertion, and bears the mark of the croſs, which is its ruling ſpirit; and if you fail but for an inſtant in fortitude, your are loſt. To ſay then that we are weak, is to ſay that the entire goſpel is not made for us, and that we are incapable of being not only ſubmiſſive and patient, but likewiſe of being chaſte, humble, diſintereſted, mortified, gentle, and charitable.

But, however weak we may be, we ought to have this confidence in the goodneſs of God, that we are never tried, afflicted or tempted beyond our ſtrength; that the Lord always proportioneth the afflictions to our weakneſs; that he dealeth out his chaſtiſements like his favours, by weight and meaſure; that in ſtriking, he meaneth not to deſtroy, but to purify and ſave us; that he himſelf aideth us to bear the croſſes which he impoſeth; that he chaſtiſeth us as a father, and not as a judge; that the ſame hand which ſtrikes

ſuſtains

ſuſtains us; that the ſame rod which makes the wound bears the oil and the honey to ſoften its pain. He knoweth the nature of our hearts, and how far our weakneſs goes; and as his intention in afflicting us is to ſanctify and not to deſtroy us, he knoweth what degree of weight to give to his hand in order to diminiſh nothing from our merit, if too light, and, on the other ſide, not to loſe it altogether, if beyond our ſtrength.

Ah! What other intention could he have in ſhedding ſorrows through our life? Is he a cruel God, who delighteth only in the miſery of his creatures? Is he a barbarous tyrant, who finds his greatneſs and his ſecurity only in the blood and in the tears of the ſubjects who worſhip him? Is he an envious and moroſe maſter, who can taſte of no happineſs while ſharing it with his ſlaves? Is it neceſſary that we ſhould ſuffer, groan, and periſh, in order to render him happy? It is on our account alone, therefore, that he puniſheth and chaſtiſeth us; his tenderneſs ſuffers, as I may ſay, for our evils; but, as his love is a juſt and enlightened love, he prefereth to leave us to ſuffer, becauſe he foreſees that, in terminating our pains, he would augment our wretchedneſs. He is, ſays an holy father, like a tender phyſician, who pities, it is true, the cries and the ſufferings of his patient, but who, in ſpite of his cries, cuts, even to the quick, the corrupted part of his wound; he is never more gentle and more compaſſionate, than when he appears moſt ſevere; and afflictions muſt indeed be uſeful and neceſſary to us, ſince a God ſo merciful and ſo good can prevail upon himſelf to afflict us.

It is written, that Joſeph, exalted to the firſt offices in Egypt, could hardly retain his tears, and felt his bowels yearn towards his brethren, in the very time that he affect-

ed

ed to ſpeak moſt harſhly to them, and that he feigned not to know them. It is in this manner that Jeſus Chriſt chaſtiſeth us. He affects, if it be permitted to ſpeak in this manner, not to acknowledge in us his coheirs and his brethren; he ſtrikes and treats us harſhly as ſtrangers; but his love ſuffers for this conſtraint; he is unable long to maintain this character of ſeverity, which is ſo foreign to him: his favours ſoon come to ſoften his blows: he ſoon ſhews himſelf ſuch as he is; and his love never fails to betray theſe appearances of rigour and anger: judge then, if the blows which come from ſo kind and ſo friendly a hand can be otherwiſe than proportioned to our weakneſs.

Let us accuſe then only the corruption, and not the weakneſs of our heart, for our impatience and murmurs. Have not weak young women formerly defied all the barbarity of tyrants? Have not children, before they had learned to ſupport even the ordinary toils of life, run with joy to brave all the rigours of the moſt frightful death? Have not old men, already ſinking under the weight of their own body, felt like the eagle their youth renewed amidſt the torments of a long martyrdom? You are weak? But it is that very weakneſs which is glorious to faith and to the religion of Jeſus Chriſt; it is even on that account that the Lord hath choſen you, to diſplay in your inſtance how much more powerful grace is than nature. If you were born with more fortitude and ſtrength, you would do leſs honour to the power of grace; to man would be attributed a patience, which ſhould be a gift of God: thus the weaker you are, the fitter inſtrument you become for the deſigns and for the glory of God. When his hand hath been heavy, he hath choſen only the weak, that man might attribute nothing to himſelf, and to overthrow by the example of their conſtancy, the vain fortitude of ſages and of philoſophers.

loſophers. His diſciples were only weak lambs, when he diſperſed them through the univerſe, and expoſed them amidſt the wolves. They rendered glory in their weakneſs to the power of grace, and to the truth of his doctrine. They are thoſe earthen veſſels which the Lord taketh delight in breaking, like thoſe of Gideon, to make the light and the power of faith ſhine forth in them with greater magnificence; and, if you entered into the deſigns of his wiſdom and of his mercy, your weakneſs, which in your opinion juſtifies your murmurs, would conſtitute the ſweeteſt conſolation of your ſufferings.

Lord, would you ſay to him, I aſk not that proud reaſon, which ſeeks in the glory of ſuffering with conſtancy, the whole conſolation of its pains: I aſk not from thee that inſenſibility of heart, which either feels not, or contemns its misfortunes. Leave me, O Lord, that weak, and timid reaſon, that tender and feeling heart, which ſeems ſo little fitted to ſuſtain its tribulations and ſufferings; only increaſe thy conſolations and favours. The more I ſhall appear weak in the ſight of men, the greater wilt thou appear in my weakneſs; the more ſhall the children of the age admire the power of faith, which alone can exalt the weakeſt and moſt timid ſouls to that point of conſtancy and firmneſs, to which all philoſophy hath never been able to attain. Firſt pretext, taken in the weakneſs of man confuted; we have now to expoſe the illuſion of the ſecond, which is founded on the exceſs, or the nature of the afflictions themſelves.

PART II. Nothing is more uſual with perſons afflicted by God, than to juſtify their complaints and their murmurs by the exceſs, or the nature of their afflictions. We always wiſh our croſſes to have no reſemblance to thoſe of others;

others; and leſt the example of their fortitude and of their faith condemn us, we ſeek out differences in our grievances, in order to juſtify that of our diſpoſitions and of our conduct. We perſuade ourſelves that we could bear with reſignation, croſſes of any other deſcription; but that thoſe with which we are overwhelmed by the Lord, are of ſuch a nature as to preclude conſolation; that the more we examine the lot of others, the more do we find our own misfortune ſingular, and our ſituation unexampled; and, that it is impoſſible to preſerve patience and ſerenity in a ſtate, where chance ſeems to have collected ſolely for us a thouſand afflicting circumſtances, which never before had happened to others.

But, to take from ſelf-love, a defence ſo weak, and ſo unworthy of faith, I would have only forthwith to anſwer you, that the more extraordinary our afflictions appear, the leſs ought we to believe them the effects of chance; the more evidently ought we to ſee in them, the ſecret and inſcrutable arrangements of a God ſingulary watchful over our deſtiny; the more ſhould we preſume that, under events ſo new, he doubtleſs concealeth new views, and ſingular deſigns of mercy upon our ſoul; the more ſhould we ſay to ourſelves, that he conſequently meaneth us not to periſh with the multitude, which is the party of the reprobate, ſeeing that he leadeth us by ways ſo uncommon and ſo little trodden. This ſingularity of misfortunes ought, in the eyes of our faith, to be a ſoothing diſtinction: he hath always conducted his choſen, in matter of affliction, as well as in other things, by new and extraordinary ways. What melancholy and ſurpriſing adventures in the life of a Noah, a Lot, a Joſeph, a Moſes, and a Job? Trace, from age to age, the hiſtory of the juſt, and you will always find in their various viciſſitudes, ſomething,

I know

I know not what of ſingular and incredible, which has ſtaggered even the belief of the ſubſequent ages. Thus, the leſs your afflictions reſemble thoſe of others, the more ſhould you conſider them as the afflictions of God's choſen: they are ſtamped with the mark of the juſt: they enter into that tradition of ſingular calamities, which from the beginning of ages forms their hiſtory. Battles loſt, when victory ſeemed certain; cities looked upon as impregnable, fallen at the ſole approach of the enemy; a kingdom, once the moſt flouriſhing in Europe, ſtricken with every evil which the Lord in his wrath can pour out upon the people; the court filled with mourning, and all the royal race almoſt extinct; ſuch, Sire, is what the Lord in his mercy reſerved for your piety; and ſuch are the unprecedented misfortunes which he prepared for you, to purify the proſperities of a reign, the moſt brilliant in our annals. The ſingularity of the unfortunate events with which God afflicteth you, is intended for the ſole purpoſe of rendering you equally pious as a Chriſtian, as you have been great as a King. It would ſeem, that every thing was to be ſingular in your reign; the proſperities, as the misfortunes; in order that, after your glory before men, nothing ſhould be wanting to your piety before God. It is a ſtriking example, prepared by his goodneſs, for our age.

And behold, my dear hearer, a ſtriking inſtance, both to inſtruct and to confute you, when you complain of the exceſs of your misfortunes and of your ſufferings. The more God afflicteth, the greater is his love and his watchfulneſs over you. More common misfortunes might have appeared to you as the conſequences merely of natural cauſes: and though all events are conducted by the ſecret ſprings of his Providence, you might perhaps have had

room to ſuppoſe, that the Lord had no particular deſigns upon you, in providing for you only certain afflictions which happen every day to the reſt of men. But, in the grievous and ſingular ſituation in which he placeth you, you can no longer hide from yourſelf, that his regards are fixed on you alone, and that you are the ſpecial object of his merciful deſigns.

Now, what more conſoling in our ſufferings? God ſeeth me; he numbereth my ſighs; he weigheth mine afflictions; he beholdeth my tears to flow; he maketh them ſubſervient to mine eternal ſanctification. Since his hand hath weighed ſo heavily, and in ſo ſingular way upon me, and ſince no earthly reſource ſeems now to be left me, I conſider myſelf, as having at laſt become an object more worthy of his cares and of his regards. Ah! If I ſtill enjoyed a ſerene and happy ſituation, his looks would no longer be upon me; he would neglect me, and I ſhould be blended before him with ſo many others, who are the proſperous of the earth. Beloved ſufferings, which, in depriving me of all human aids, reſtore to me my God, and render him mine only reſource in all my ſorrows! Precious afflictions, which, in turning me aſide from all creatures, are the cauſe that I now become the continual object of the remembrance and of the mercies of my Lord!

I might reply to you, in the ſecond place, that common and momentary afflictions would have arouſed our faith but for an inſtant. We would ſoon have found, in every thing around us, a thouſand reſources to obliterate the remembrance of that ſlight misfortune. Pleſaures, human conſolations, the new events which the world is continually offering to our ſight, would ſoon have beguiled our ſorrow, and reſtored our reliſh for the world and for its

its vain amuſements; and our heart, always in concert with all the objects which flatter it, would ſoon have been tired of its ſighs and of its ſorrow. But the Lord, in ſending afflictions in which religion alone can become our reſource, hath meant to preclude all return towards the world, and to place betwixt our weakneſs and us a barrier which can never be ſhaken by either time or accidents; he hath anticipated our inconſtancy, in rendering precautions neceſſary to us, which might not perhaps have always appeared equally uſeful. He read in the character of our heart, that our fidelity in flying the dangers of and ſeparating ourſelves from the world, would not extend beyond our ſorrow; that the ſame moment which beheld us conſoled would witneſs our change; that, in forgetting our chagrins, we would ſoon have forgetten our pious reſolutions; and that ſhort-lived afflictions would have made us only ſhort-lived righteous. He hath therefore eſtabliſhed the continuance of our piety upon that of our ſufferings; he hath lodged fixed and conſtant afflictions, as ſureties for the conſtancy of our faith; and leſt, in leaving our ſoul in our own power, we ſhould again reſtore it to the world, he hath reſolved to render it ſafe, by attaching it for ever to the foot of the croſs. We are thoroughly ſenſible ourſelves that a great blow was required to rouſe us from our lethargy; that we had been little benefited by the ſlight afflictions with which the Lord had hitherto been pleaſed to viſit us; and that ſcarcely had he ſtricken us, when we had forgotten the hand that had inflicted ſo ſalutary an wound. Of what then, O my God, ſhould I complain? That exceſs which I find in my troubles, is an exceſs of thy mercies. I do not conſider that the leſs thou ſpareſt the patience the more thou haſteneſt his cure, and that all the utility and all the ſecurity of our ſufferings conſiſts in the rigour of thy blows. My ſweeteſt conſolation in the afflicting

flicting ſtate in which thy providence O Lord, hath been pleaſed to place me, ſhall then be, in future, to reflect that at leaſt thou ſpareſt me not; that thou meaſureſt thy rigours and thy remedies upon my wants, and not upon my deſires; and that thou haſt more regard to the ſecurity of my ſalvation than to the injuſtice of my complaints.

I might ſtill reply to you: Enter into judgment with the Lord, you who complain of the exceſs of your ſufferings; place in a balance, on the one ſide your crimes, and on the other your afflictions; meaſure the rigour of all his chaſtiſements upon the enormity of your offences; compare that which you ſuffer with that which you ought to ſuffer; ſee if your afflictions go the ſame length as your ſenſeleſs pleaſures have done; if the keenneſs and the continuance of your ſorrows correſpond with thoſe of your profane debaucheries; if the ſtate of reſtraint in which you live equals the licentiouſneſs and the depravity of your former manners; and ſhould your afflictions be found to over-balance your iniquities, then boldly reproach the Lord with his injuſtice. You judge of your ſufferings by your inclinations, but judge of them by your crimes. What! not a ſingle moment of your worldly life but what has perhaps made you deſerving of an eternal miſery, and you murmur againſt the goodneſs of a God who commuteth theſe everlaſting torments, ſo often merited, into a few rapid and momentary afflictions, and even againſt which the conſolations of faith hold out ſo many reſources!

What injuſtice! what ingratitude! Ah! have a care, unfaithful ſoul, leſt the Lord liſten to thee in his wrath; have a care, leſt he puniſh thy paſſions, by providing for thee, here below, whatever is favourable to them; leſt thou be not found worthy in his ſight of theſe temporal afflictions;

fictions; left he reſerve the time of his juſtice and of his vengeance, and that he treat thee like thoſe unfortunate victims who are ornamented with flowers, who are nurſed and fattened with ſo much care, only becauſe they are deſtined for the ſacrifice, and that the knife which is to ſtab, and the pile which is to conſume them, are in readineſs upon the altar. He is terrible in his gifts as in his wrath; and ſeeing that guilt muſt be puniſhed either with fleeting puniſhments here below, or with eternal pains after this life, nothing ought to appear more fearful in the eyes of faith than to be a ſinner, and yet proſperous on the earth.

Great God! let it be here then for me the time of thy vengeance; and ſince my crimes cannot go unpuniſhed, haſten, O Lord, to ſatisfy thy juſtice. The more I am ſpared here, the more ſhalt thou appear to me as a terrible God, who refuſeth to let me go for ſome fleeting afflictions, and whoſe wrath can be appeaſed by nothing but mine eternal miſery. Lend not thine ear to the cries of my grief, nor to the lamentations of a corrupted heart, which knows not its true intereſts. I diſown, Lord, theſe too human ſighs which the ſadneſs of my ſtate ſtill continually forces from me; theſe carnal tears which affliction ſo often maketh me to ſhed in thy preſence. Liſten not to the intreaties which I have hitherto made to obtain an end to my ſufferings; complete rather thy vengeance upon me here below; reſerve nothing for that dreadful eternity, where thy chaſtiſements ſhall be without end, and without meaſure. I aſk thee only to ſuſtain my weakneſs; and, in ſhedding ſorrows through my life, ſhed likewiſe upon it thy grace, which conſoles, and recompenſes with ſuch uſury, an afflicted heart.

To

To all theſe truths, ſo conſoling for an afflicted ſoul, I might ſtill add, that our ſuffering appear exceſſive only through the exceſs of the corruption of our heart; that the keenneſs of our afflictions ſprings ſolely from that of our paſſions; that it is the impropriety of our attachments to the objects loſt, which renders their loſs ſo grievous; that we are keenly afflicted only when we had been keenly attached; and that the exceſs of our afflictions is always the puniſhment of the exceſs of our iniquitous loves. I might add, that we always magnify whatever regards ourſelves; that the very idea of ſingularity in our misfortunes, flatters our vanity, at the ſame time that it authoriſes our murmurs; that we never wiſh to reſemble others; that we feel a ſecret pleaſure in perſuading ourſelves that we are ſingle of our kind: we wiſh all the world to be occupied with our misfortune alone, as if we were the only unfortunate of the earth. Yes, my brethren, the evils of others are nothing in our eyes: we ſee not that all around us are, perhaps, more unhappy than we; that we have a thouſand reſources in our afflictions, which are denied to others; that we derive a thouſand conſolations in our infirmities, from wealth, and the number of perſons watchful over our ſmalleſt wants; that, in the loſs of a perſon dear to us, a thouſand means of ſoftening its bitterneſs ſtill remain from the ſituation in which Providence hath placed us; that, in domeſtic diviſions, we find comforts in the tenderneſs and in the confidence of our friends, which we had been unable to procure among our relatives; laſtly, that we find a thouſand human indemnifications to our misfortunes, and that, were we to place in a balance, on the one ſide our conſolations, and on the other our ſufferings, we ſhould find, that there are ſtill remaining in

our

our ſtate more comforts, capable of corrupting us, than croſſes calculated to ſanctify us.

Thus, it is almoſt ſolely the great and the proſperous of the world, who complain of the exceſs of their misfortunes and ſufferings. The unfortunate majority of the earth, who are born to, and live in penury and diſtreſs, paſs in ſilence, and almoſt in the neglect of their ſufferings, their wretched days: the ſmalleſt gleam of comfort and eaſe reſtores ſerenity and cheerfulneſs to their heart: the ſlighteſt conſolations obliterate their troubles: a moment of pleaſure makes up for a whole year of ſufferance: while thoſe fortunate and ſenſual ſouls, amidſt all their abundance, are ſeen to reckon, as an unheard-of misfortune, the diſappointment of a ſingle deſire; we view them turning into a martyrdom for themſelves, the wearineſs and even the ſatiety of pleaſures; drawing from imaginary evils, the ſource of a thouſand real vexations; feeling tenfold more anguiſh for the failure of a ſingle acquiſition, than pleaſure in the poſſeſſion of all they enjoy; in a word, conſidering, as the greateſt of misfortunes, the leaſt interruption, however trifling, to their ſenſual happineſs.

Yes, my brethren, it is the great and powerful alone who complain; who continually imagine themſelves the only unhappy, who never have enough of comforters; who, on the ſlighteſt reverſe, ſee aſſembled around them, not only thoſe worldly friends whom their rank and fortune procure, but likewiſe all the pious and enlightened miniſters of the goſpel, diſtinguiſhed by the public eſteem, and whoſe holy inſtructions would, in general, be much better beſtowed, on ſo many other unfortunate individuals, who are deſtitute of every worldly reſource and religious

gious assistance, and to which they would themselves be so much more beneficial. But before the tribunal of Jesus Christ, your afflictions shall be weighed with those of so many of your unfortunate fellow-creatures, and those misfortunes, and so much the more dreadful, as they are more hidden and more neglected; it will then be demanded of you, if it belonged to you to complain and to murmur, it will be demanded, if you were entitled to lay such stress upon calamities, which would have been consolations to so many others, if it was your business to murmur so highly against a God, who treated you with such indulgence, while his hand was so heavy on such unfortunate fellow-creatures: if they had less right to the riches, and to the pleasures of the earth, than you, if their soul was not less noble, and less precious before God than yours; in a word, if they were either more criminal, or of another nature than you?

Alas! it is not only our own self-love, but it is likewise our hardness towards our brethren, which magnifies to us our own misfortunes. Let us enter those poor unprovided dwellings, where shame conceals such bitter and affecting poverty; let us view those asylums of public compassion, where every calamity seems to reign: it is there that we shall learn to appreciate our own afflictions: it is there that touched to the heart with the excess of so many evils, we shall blush to give even a name to the slightness of ours: it is there that our murmurs against Heaven shall be changed into thanksgivings, and that less taken up with the slight crosses, sent us by the Lord, than with so many others from which he spareth us, we shall begin to dread his indulgence, far from complaining of his severity. My God! how awful shall be the judgment of the great and the mighty, since, besides the inevitable abuse of their

prosperity

proſperity, the affliction, which ought to have ſanctified its uſe, and expiated its abuſes, ſhall become themſelves their greateſt crimes!

But how employ afflictions in ſanctifying the dangers of their ſtation, or in working out ſalvation, ſince they ſeem to caſt ſuch invincible obſtacles in their way? This is the laſt pretext drawn from the incompatibility which afflictions ſeem to have with our ſalvation.

PART III. It is very ſurpriſing, that the corruption of the human heart finds, even in ſufferances, obſtacles to ſalvation, and that Chriſtians continually juſtify their murmurs againſt the wiſdom and the goodneſs of God, by accuſing him of ſending croſſes incompatible with their eternal ſalvation. Nothing is more common, however, in the world, than this iniquitous language; and when we exhort the ſouls afflicted by God to convert theſe fleeting afflictions into the price of heaven and eternity, they reply, that, in this ſtate of diſtreſs, they are incapable of every thing; that the obſtacles and vexations which they are continually incountering, far from recalling them to order and to duty, ſerve only to irritate the mind, and to harden the heart; and that tranquillity muſt be reſtored before they can turn their thoughts towards God.

Now, I ſay, that, of all the pretexts employed in juſtification of the unchriſtian uſe made of afflictions, this is the moſt abſurd and the moſt culpable. The muſt culpable, for it is blaſpheming Providence to pretend, that it places you in ſituations incompatible with your ſalvation. Whatever it doth or permitteth here below, it only doth or permitteth in order to facilitate to men the ways of eternal life; every event, proſperous or improſperous, in the

meaſure of our lot, is meant by it as a mean of ſalvation and of ſanctification; all its deſigns upon us tend to that ſole purpoſe; whatever we are, even in the order of nature, our birth, our fortune, our talents, our age, our dignities, our protectors, our ſubjects, our maſters: all this, in its views of mercy upon us, enters into the impenetrable deſigns of our eternal ſanctification. All this viſible world itſelf, is made only for the age to come: whatever paſſeth, hath its ſecret connections with that eternal age, where things ſhall paſs no more; whatever we ſee, is only the image and truſt of the inviſible things. The world is worthy of the cares of a wiſe and a merciful God, only inaſmuch as, by ſecret and adorable relations, its diverſe revolutions are to form that heavenly church, that immortal aſſembly of choſen, where he ſhall for ever be glorified. To pretend, then, that he placeth us in ſituations, which not only have no relation to, but are even incompatible with our eternal intereſts, is to make a temporal God of him, and to blaſpheme his adorable wiſdom.

But, not only nothing is more culpable than this pretext, I ſay, likewiſe, that nothing is more fooliſh: for, it is only by detaching itſelf from this miſerable world, that a ſoul returns to God; and nothing, ſays St. Auguſtine, ſo effectually detaches from this miſerable world, as when the Lord ſheddeth ſalutary ſorrows over its dangerous pleaſures. "Lord," ſaid an holy king of Judah, "I had neglected thee in proſperity and in abundance; the pleaſures of royalty, and the ſplendour of a long and glorious reign, had corrupted my heart; the flatteries and the deceitful words of the wicked, had lulled me into a profound and a fatal ſleep; but thine hand hath been upon me, in pouring out upon my people all the ſcourges of thy wrath, in raiſing up againſt me mine own children and ſubjects, whom I had loaded

loaded with favours; and I awoke: thou haſt humbled me, and I have had recourſe to thee; thou haſt afflicted me, and I have ſought thee: and I have found out that I ought not to have my truſt in men; that proſperity is a dream; glory a miſtake; the talents which men admire, vices concealed under the brilliant outſides of human virtues; the whole world, a deception which feeds us with only vain phantoms, and leaves nothing ſolid in the heart; and that thou alone art worthy to be ſerved, for thou alone forſakeſt not thoſe who ſerve thee."

Behold the moſt natural effect of afflictions: they facilitate all the duties of religion; hatred of the world in rendering it more diſagreeable to us; indifference towards all creatures, by giving us experience, either of their perfidy by infidelities, or of their frailty by unexpected loſſes; privation of pleaſures, by placing obſtacles in their way; the deſire of eternal riches, and conſoling returns towards God, by leaving us almoſt no conſolation among men: laſtly, all the obligations of faith become more eaſy to the afflicted ſoul; his good deſires find fewer obſtacles, his weakneſs fewer rocks, his faith more aids, his lukewarmneſs more reſources, his paſſion more checks, and even his virtue more meritorious opportunities.

Thus the church was never more fervent and purer than when ſhe was afflicted; the ages of her ſufferings and perſecutions were the ages of her ſplendor and of her zeal. Tranquillity afterwards corrupted her manners; her days became leſs pure and leſs innocent as ſoon as they became more fortunate and powerful; her glory ended almoſt with her misfortunes; and her peace, as the prophet ſaid, was more bitter, through the licentiouſneſs of her children, than

than even her troubles had ever been through the barbarity of her enemies.

Even you, who complain that the croſſes with which the Lord afflicteth you diſcourage you and check any deſire of labouring towards your ſalvation, you well know that happier days have not been for you, more holy and more faithful: you well know that then, intoxicated with the world and its pleaſures, you lived in a total neglect of your God, and that the comforts of your ſituation were the ſpurs of your corruption, and the inſtruments of your iniquitous deſires.

But ſuch is the perpetual illuſion of our ſelf-love. When fortunate, when every thing anſwers to our wiſhes and the world ſmiles upon us, then we alledge the dangers of our ſtate to juſtify the errors of our worldly manners: we ſay that it is very difficult, at a certain age and in a certain ſituation, when a rank is to be ſupported, and appearances to be kept up with the world, to condemn ourſelves to ſolitude, to prayer, to flight from pleaſures, and to all the duties of a gloomy and a Chriſtian life. But, on the other ſide, when under affliction; when the body is ſtruck with laſſitude, and fortune forſakes us; when our friends deceive, and our maſters neglect us; when our enemies overpower, and our relations become our perſecutors; we complain that every thing eſtranges us from God in this ſtate of bitterneſs and ſorrow; that the mind is not ſufficiently tranquil to devote any thoughts to ſalvation; that the heart is too exaſperated to feel any thing but its own misfortunes; that amuſements and pleaſures now become neceſſary, muſt be ſought to lull its grief, and to prevent the total loſs of reaſon, in giving way to all the horrors

horrors of a profound melancholy. It is thus, O my God! that by our eternal contradictions we juſtify the adorable ways of thy wiſdom upon the lots of men, and that we provide for thy juſtice, powerful reaſons to overthrow one day the illuſion, and the falſity of our pretexts.

For, beſides, be our ſufferings what they may, the hiſtory of religion holds out righteous characters to our example, who, in the ſame ſituation as we, have held their ſoul in patience, and turned their afflictions into a reſource of ſalvation. Do you weep the loſs of a perſon dear to your heart? Judith in a ſimilar affliction, found the increaſe of her piety and faith, and changed the tears of her widowhood into thoſe of retirement and penitence. If a pining health render life more gloomy and bitter than even death itſelf, Job found, in the wrecks of an ulcerated body, motives of compunction, longings for eternity, and the hopes of an immortal reſurrection. If your character in the world be ſtained by calumnies, Suſanna held out an unſhaken ſoul under the blackeſt aſperſions; and knowing that ſhe had the Lord in teſtimony of her innocence, ſhe left to him the care of avenging her upon the injuſtice of men. If your fortune be the victim of treachery, David, dethroned, conſidered the humiliation of his new ſtate as the juſt puniſhment of the abuſe he had made of his paſt proſperity. If an unfortunate union become your daily croſs, Eſther found, in the caprices and frenzies of a faithleſs huſband, the proof of her virtue, and the merit of her meekneſs and patience. In a word, place yourſelf in the moſt diſmal ſituations, and you will find righteous, who have wrought out their ſalvation in the ſame; and without applying to former ages for examples, look around, (the hand of the Lord is not yet ſhortened,) and you will ſee ſouls who, loaded with the ſame croſſes as you, make a very

a very different uſe of them, and find means of ſalvation in the very ſame events, where you find only a rock to your innocence, or a pretext for your murmurs. What do I ſay? you will ſee ſouls whom the mercy of God hath recalled from their errors by pouring out ſalutary ſorrows upon their life; by overturning an eſtabliſhed fortune; by chilling an envied favour; by ſapping an health, apparently unalterable; by terminating a profane connection through a glaring inconſtancy. You yourſelf, then, a witneſs of their change and of their converſion, have leſſened the merit of it, from the facilities provided by chagrin and afflictions; you have placed little confidence in a virtue which misfortunes had rendered as if neceſſary; you have ſaid that it required little exertion to forſake a world which was become tired of us; that at the firſt gleam of good-fortune pleaſures would ſoon be ſeen to ſucceed to all this great ſhow of devotion, and that they had devoted themſelves to God only becauſe they had nothing better to do. Unjuſt that you are! and at preſent, when there is queſtion of returning to him in your affliction, you ſay that it is not poſſible; that an heart preſſed and bowed down with ſorrow is incapable of paying attention to any thing but his grief, and that we are more hardened than touched in this ſtate of diſtreſs and misfortune; and after having cenſured and caſt a ſtain upon the piety of afflicted ſouls, as a meaſure too eaſy and to which little merit is attached, as it required almoſt no exertion, you excuſe yourſelf from adopting it in your affliction, and from making a Chriſtian uſe of it, becauſe you pretend that it is not poſſible in it to pay attention to any thing but to your ſorrow. Anſwer, or rather tremble leſt you find the rock of your ſalvation in a ſituation which ought to be its ſureſt reſource. After having abuſed proſperity, tremble leſt you now make your misfortunes the fatal inſtruments of your deſtruction, and

leſt

leſt you ſhut upon yourſelf all the ways of goodneſs which God might open to you in order to recal you to him.

When, O my God! will the time come that my ſoul, exalting itſelf through faith above all creatures, ſhall no longer worſhip but thee in them; ſhall no longer attribute events to them of which thou alone art the author; ſhall recogniſe in the diverſe ſituations in which thou placeſt it the adorable arrangements of thy providence; and, even amid all its croſſes, ſhall taſte that unalterable peace which the world with all its pleaſures can never beſtow?

How melancholy, in effect, my brethren, when viſited and afflicted of God, to ſeek for conſolation in riſing up againſt the hand which ſtrikes us: in murmuring againſt his juſtice; in caſting ourſelves off from him, as it were in a frenzy of rage, deſpair, and revenge, and to ſeek conſolation in our own madneſs! What an horrible ſituation is that of a fooliſh ſoul, whom God afflicteth, and who for conſolation flies in the face of his God; ſeeks to eaſe his troubles, in multiplying his treſpaſſes: yields himſelf up to debauchery, in order to drown his ſorrows; and make the overwhelming ſadneſs of guilt, an horrible reſource againſt the ſadneſs of his afflictions!

No, my brethren, religion alone can truly conſole us in our misfortunes. Philoſophy checked complaints; but it did not ſoften the anguiſh. The world lulls cares, but it does not cure them: and amidſt all its ſenſeleſs pleaſures, the ſecret ſting of ſadneſs always remains buried in the heart. God alone can comfort our afflictions; and is another neceſſary to a faithful ſoul? Weak creatures! You may eaſily, by vain ſpeeches, and by that cuſtomary language of compaſſion and tenderneſs, make yourſelves to be underſtood

underſtood by the ears of the body; but, there is none but the God of all conſolation who can ſpeak to the heart: in the exceſs of my pains, I vainly ſought conſolation among ye: I have ſharpened my ſufferings, while thinking to ſoften them, and thy vain conſolations have been to me only freſh ſorrows.

Great God! It is at thy feet, that I mean henceforth to pour out all the bitterneſs of mine heart: it is with thee alone, that I mean to forget all my grievances, all my ſufferings, all creatures. Hitherto I have given way to chagrins and to ſadneſs altogether human; a thouſand times have I wiſhed that thy wiſdom were regulated by the mad projects of my heart; my thoughts have wandered; my mind hath formed a thouſand deluſive dreams; my heart hath purſued theſe vain phantoms: I have longed for an higher birth, more fortune, talents, fame, and health: I have lulled myſelf in theſe ideas of an imaginary happineſs. Fool that am! As if I were capable of altering at my pleaſure the immutable order of thy Providence! As if I had been wiſer, or more enlightened than thee, O my God, upon my true intereſts! I have never entered into thine eternal deſigns upon me; I have never conſidered the ſorrows of my ſituation as entering into the order of mine eternal deſtination; and, even to this day, my joys and my ſorrows have depended upon the created alone: conſequently my joys have never been tranquil, and my ſorrows have always been without reſource. But henceforth, O my God! thou ſhalt be mine only comforter: and I will ſeek in the meditation of thy holy law, and in my ſubmiſſion to thine eternal decrees, thoſe ſolid conſolations which I have never found in the world, and which, in ſoftening our afflictions here below, ſecure to us, at the ſame time, their immortal reward hereafter.

SERMON

SERMON XIII.

ON PRAYER.

MATTHEW xv. 22.

Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David.

SUCH is the lamentation of a ſoul touched with its wretchedneſs, and which addreſſes itſelf to the ſovereign phyſician, in whoſe compaſſion alone it hopes to find relief. This was formerly the prayer of a woman of Canaan, who wiſhed to obtain from the Son of David the recovery of her daughter. Perſuaded of his power, and expecting every thing from his uſual goodneſs to the unfortunate, ſhe knew no ſurer way of rendering him propitious, than the cry of her affliction, and the ſimple tale of her misfortune. And this is the model which the church now propoſes to us, in order to animate and to inſtruct us how to pray; that is to ſay, in order to render more pleaſing, and more familiar to us this moſt eſſential duty of Chriſtian piety.

For, my brethren, to pray, is the condition of man; it is the firſt duty of man; it is the ſole reſource of man; it is the whole conſolation of man; and, to ſpeak in the language of the Holy Spirit, it is the whole man.

Yes, if the entire world, in the midſt of which we live, be but one continued temptation; if all the ſituations in which we may be, and all the objects which environ us, ſeem united with our corruption, for the purpoſe of either weakening or ſeducing us; if riches corrupt, and poverty exaſperate; if proſperity exalt, and affliction depreſs; if buſineſs prey upon, and eaſe render effeminate; if the ſciences inflate, and ignorance lead us into error; if mutual intercourſe trivially engage us too much, and ſolitude leave us too much to ourſelves; if pleaſures ſeduce, and pious works excite our pride; if health arouſe the paſſions, and ſickneſs nouriſh either lukewarmneſs, or murmurings; in a word, if, ſince the fall of nature, every thing in, or around us, be a freſh danger to be dreaded; in a ſituation ſo deplorable, what hope of ſalvation, O my God! could there be ſtill remaining to man, if, from the bottom of his wretchedneſs, he had it not in his power to make his lamentations, to be continually mounting towards the throne of thy mercy, in order to prevail that thou thyſelf may come to his aid; that thou may interfere to put a check upon his paſſions, to clear up his errors, to ſuſtain his weakneſs, to leſſen his temptations, to abridge his hours of trials, and to ſave him from his backſlidings?

The Chriſtian is therefore a man of prayer; his origin, his ſituation, his nature, his wants, his place of abode, all inform him that prayer is neceſſary. The church herſelf, in which he is incorporated through the grace of regeneration, a ſtranger here below, is always plaintive and full of lamentation; ſhe recogniſes her children only through their ſighs which they direct towards their country; and the Chriſtian who does not pray, cuts himſelf off from the aſſembly of the holy, and is worſe than an unbeliever.

How

How comes it then, my brethren, that a duty not only ſo eſſential, but even ſo conſoling for man, is at preſent ſo much neglected? How comes it that it is conſidered either as a gloomy and tireſome duty, or as appropriated ſolely for retired ſouls; inſomuch that our inſtructions upon prayer ſcarcely intereſt thoſe who liſten to us, who ſeem as if perſuaded that they are more adapted to the cloiſter than to the court?

Whence comes this abuſe, and this univerſal neglect in the world of prayer? From two pretexts, which I now mean to overthrow: 1*ſtly*, They do not pray, becauſe they know not, ſay they, how to pray, and conſequently, that it is loſt time; 2*dly*, They do not pray, becauſe they complain that they find nothing in prayer but wanderings of the mind, which render it both inſipid and diſagreeable. Firſt pretext, drawn from their ignorance of the manner in which they ought to pray. Second pretext, founded on the diſguſts and the difficulties of prayer. You muſt be taught, therefore, how to pray, ſince you know it not. And, 3*dly*, the habit of prayer muſt be rendered eaſy to you, ſince you find it ſo troubleſome and difficult.

PART I. "The commandments which I command you, ſaid formerly the Lord to his people, are neither above your ſtrength, nor the reach of your mind: they are not hidden from you, nor far off, that you ſhould ſay, who ſhall go up for us to Heaven and bring them to us, that we may hear them and do them? Nor are they beyond the ſea, that you ſhould ſay, who ſhall go over the ſea for us and bring them unto us, that we may hear them and do them? But the word is very nigh unto you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it."

Now,

Now, what the Lord ſaid in general of all the precepts of the law, that we have no occaſion to ſeek beyond ourſelves for the knowledge of them, but that they may be all accompliſhed in our heart and in our mouth, may more particularly be ſaid of the precept of prayer, which is as if the firſt and the moſt eſſential of all.

Nevertheleſs, what they commonly oppoſe in the world againſt this duty is, that, when they come to prayer, they know not what to ſay to God, and that praying is a ſecret of which they have never as yet been able to comprehend any thing. I ſay then, that the ſource of this pretext ſprings from three iniquitous diſpoſitions: the firſt is, that they are miſtaken in the idea which they form of prayer; the ſecond is, that they are not ſufficiently ſenſible of their own wretchedneſs and wants; and the third is, that they do not love their God.

1*ſtly*, I ſay that they are miſtaken in the idea which they form of prayer. In effect, prayer is not an exertion of the mind, an arrangement of ideas, a profound knowledge of the myſteries and counſels of God; it is a ſimple emotion of the heart; it is a lamentation of the ſoul, deeply affected at the ſight of its own wretchedneſs; it is a keen and inward feeling of our wants and of our weakneſs, and an humble confidence which it lays before its Lord, in order to obtain relief and deliverance from them. Prayer ſuppoſes in the ſoul which prays, neither great lights, uncommon knowledge, nor a mind more cultivated and exalted than that of the reſt of men; it ſuppoſes only more faith, more contrition, and a warmer deſire of deliverance from its temptations and from its wretchedneſs. Prayer is neither a ſecret nor a ſcience which we learn from men; nor is it an art, or a private method, upon which it is neceſ-

ſary

ſary to conſult ſkilful teachers, in order to be maſter of its rules and precepts. The methods and the maxims thereupon, pretended to be laid down to us in our days, are either ſingular ways which are not to be followed, or the vain ſpeculations of an idle mind, or a fanaticiſm, which may ſtop at nothing, and which, far from edifying the church, hath merited her cenſures, and hath furniſhed, to the impious, matter of deriſion againſt her, and to the world, freſh pretexts of contempt for, and diſguſt at prayer. Prayer is a duty, upon which we are all born inſtructed: the rules of this divine ſcience are written ſolely in our hearts; and the ſpirit of God is the ſole maſter to teach it.

An holy and innocent ſoul, who is penetrated with the greatneſs of God, ſtruck with the terror of his judgments, touched with his infinite mercies, who only knows to humble himſelf before him, to acknowledge, in the ſimplicity of his heart, his goodneſs and wonders, to adore the orders of his providence upon him, to accept before him of the croſſes and afflictions impoſed upon him by the wiſdom of his counſels; who knows no prayer more ſublime, than to be ſenſible before God of all the corruption of his heart; to groan over his own hardneſs of heart and oppoſition to all good, to entreat of him, with a fervent faith, to change him, to deſtroy in him that man of ſin, which, in ſpite of his firmeſt reſolves, continually forces him to make ſo many falſe ſteps in the ways of God: a ſoul of this deſcription is a thouſand times more inſtructed in the knowledge of prayer than all the teachers themſelves, and may ſay with the prophet, "I have more underſtanding than all "my teachers." He ſpeaks to his God as a friend to a friend; he is ſorry for having offended him; he upbraids himſelf for not having, as yet, ſufficient force to renounce all to

pleaſe

pleaſe him; he takes no pride in the ſublimity of his thoughts; he leaves his heart to ſpeak, and gives way to all its tenderneſs before the only object of his love. Even when his mind wanders, his heart watches and ſpeaks for him; his very diſguſts become a prayer, through the feelings which are then excited in his heart; he is tenderly affected, he ſighs, he is diſpleaſed with, and a burden to himſelf, he feels the weight of his bonds, he exerts himſelf as if to break and throw them off, he a thouſand times renews his proteſtations of fidelity, he bluſhes and is aſhamed at always promiſing, and yet being continually faithleſs: ſuch is the whole ſecret, and the whole ſcience of prayer. And what is there in all this beyond the reach of every believing ſoul?

Who had inſtructed our poor woman of Canaan in prayer? A ſtranger, and daughter of Tyre and Sidon, who was unacquainted with the wonders of the law, and the oracles of the prophets; who had not yet heard from the mouth of the Saviour, the words of eternal life; who was ſtill under the ſhadows of ignorance and of death; ſhe prays, however; her love, her confidence, the deſire of being granted, teach her to pray; her heart being touched, conſtitutes the whole merit and the whole ſublimity of her prayer.

And ſurely, if, in order to pray, it were requiſite to riſe to thoſe ſublime ſtates of prayer, to which God exalteth ſome holy ſouls; if it were neceſſary to be wrapt in extacy, and tranſported even up to heaven, like Paul, there to hear thoſe ineffable ſecrets which God expoſeth not to man, and which it is not permitted, even to man himſelf, to reveal; or, like Moſes upon the holy mountain, to be placed upon a cloud of glory, and, face to face, to ſee God: that is to ſay, if it were neceſſary to have attained to that degree

gree of intimate union with the Lord, in which the ſoul, as if already freed from its body, ſprings up even into the boſom of its God; contemplates at leiſure his infinite perfections; forgets, as I may ſay, its members which are ſtill upon the earth; is no longer diſturbed, nor even diverted by the phantoms of the ſenſes; is fixed, and if abſorbed in the contemplation of the wonders and the grandeur of God; and, already participating in his eternity, could count a whole age paſſed in that bleſſed ſtate, as only a ſhort and rapid moment; if, I ſay, it were neceſſary, in order to pray, to be favoured with theſe rare and excellent gifts of the Holy Spirit, you might tell us, like thoſe new believers of whom St. Paul makes mention, that you have not yet received them, and that you know not what is even that ſpirit which communicates them.

But prayer is not a ſpecial gift ſet apart for privileged ſouls alone; it is a common duty impoſed upon every believer; it is not ſolely a virtue of perfection, and reſerved for certain purer and more holy ſouls; it is, like charity, an indiſpenſible virtue, requiſite to the perfect as to the imperfect, within the capacity of the illiterate equally as of the learned, commanded to the ſimple as to the moſt enlightened; it is the virtue of all men; it is the ſcience of every believer; it is the perfection of every creature. Whoever has a heart, and is capable of loving the Author of his being; whoever has a reaſon capable of knowing the nothingneſs of the creature and the greatneſs of God, muſt know how to adore, to return him thanks, and to have recourſe to him; to appeaſe him when offended; to call upon him when turned away; to thank him when favourable; to humble himſelf when he ſtrikes; to lay his

wants

wants before him, or to entreat his countenance and protection.

Thus, when the diſciples aſk of Jeſus Chriſt to teach them to pray, he doth not unfold to them the height, the ſublimity, the depth of the myſteries of God; he ſolely informs them that, in order to pray, it is neceſſary to conſider God as a tender, bountiful, and careful father: to addreſs themſelves to him with a reſpectful familiarity, and with a confidence blended with fear and love; to ſpeak to him the language of our weakneſs and of our wretchedneſs; to borrow no expreſſions but from our heart; to make no attempt of riſing to him, but rather to draw him nearer to us; to lay our wants befor him, and to implore his aid; to wiſh that all men bleſs and worſhip him; and that his reign be eſtabliſhed in all hearts; that his will be done, as in heaven ſo in earth; that ſinners return to the paths of righteouſneſs; that believers attain to the knowledge of the truth; that he forgive us our ſins; that he preſerve us from temptations; that he aſſiſt our weakneſs; that he deliver us from our miſeries. All is ſimple, but all is grand in this divine prayer; it recals man to himſelf, and, in order to adopt it as a model, nothing more is required than to feel our wants, and to wiſh deliverance from them.

And behold why have I ſaid that the ſecond iniquitous diſpoſition, from whence the pretext, founded upon not knowing how to pray proceeded, is, that they do not ſufficiently feel the infinite wants of their ſoul. For, I aſk you, my brethren, is it neceſſary to teach a ſick perſon to entreat relief? is a man preſſed with hunger difficulted how to ſolicit food? is an unfortunate perſon beaten with the tempeſt,

tempeſt, and on the point of periſhing, at a loſs how to implore aſſiſtance? Alas! doth the urgent neceſſity alone not amply furniſh expreſſions? In the ſole ſenſe of our evils, do we not find that animated eloquence, thoſe perſuaſive emotions, thoſe preſſing remonſtrances which ſolicit their cure? Has a ſuffering heart occaſion for any maſter to teach it to complain? In it every thing ſpeaks, every thing expreſſes its affliction, every thing announces its ſufferings, and every thing ſolicits relief; even its ſilence is eloquent.

You yourſelf, who complain that you know not what method to take in praying, in your temporal afflictions, from the inſtant that a dangerous malady threatens your life, that an unlooked for event endangers your property and fortune, that an approaching death is on the point of ſnatching from you a perſon either dear or neceſſary; then you raiſe your hands to heaven; then you ſend up your lamentations and prayers; you addreſs yourſelf to the God who ſtrikes and who relieves; you then know how to pray; you have no need of going beyond your own heart for leſſons and rules to lay your afflictions before him, nor do you conſult able teachers in order to know what to ſay to him; you have occaſion for nothing but your grief, your evils alone have found out the method of inſtructing you.

Ah! my brethren, if we felt the wants of our ſoul as we feel thoſe of the body; if our eternal ſalvation intereſted us as much as we are for a fortune of dirt, or for a weak and periſhable health, we would ſoon be ſkilful in the divine art of prayer; we would not complain that we had nothing to ſay in the preſence of a God of whom we have ſo much to aſk; the mind would be little difficulted in finding wherewith to entertain him; our evils alone

would ſpeak; in ſpite of ourſelves, our heart would burſt forth in holy effuſions, like that of Samuel's mother before the ark of the Lord; we would no longer be maſter of our ſorrows and tears; and the moſt certain mark of our want of faith, and that we know ourſelves not, is that of not knowing what to ſay to the Lord in the ſpace of a ſhort prayer.

And, after all, is it impoſſible that, in the miſerable condition of this human life, ſurrounded as we are with ſo many dangers; made up ourſelves of ſo many weakneſſes; on the point, every moment, of being led aſtray by the objects of vanity, corrupted by the illuſions of the ſenſes, and dragged away by the force of example; a continual prey to the tyranny of our inclinations, to the dominion of our fleſh, to the inconſtancy of our heart, to the inequalities of our reaſon, to the caprices of our imagination, to the eternal variations of our temper; depreſſed by loſs of favour, elated by proſperity, enervated by abundance, ſoured by poverty, led away by cuſtoms, ſhaken by accidents, flattered with praiſe, irritated by contempt; continually wavering between our paſſions and our duties, between ourſelves and the law of God; is it poſſible, I ſay, that in a ſituation ſo deplorable, we can be difficulted what to aſk of the Lord, or what to ſay to him, when we appear in his preſence? O my God! why then is man not leſs miſerable? Or why is he not better acquainted with his wants?

Ah! if you told us my dear hearer, that you know not where to begin in prayer; that your wants are ſo infinite, your miſeries and your paſſions ſo multiplied, that, were you to pretend to expoſe them all to the Lord, you would never have done: if you ſaid to us, that the more you ſearch

ſearch into your heart, the more your wounds unfold, the more corruption and diſorders do you diſcover in yourſelf, and that, deſpairing of being able to relate to the Lord the endleſs detail of your weakneſſes, you preſent your heart wholly to him, you leave your evils to ſpeak for you, you ground your whole art of prayer on your confuſion, your humiliation, and your ſilence; and that in conſequence of having too much to ſay to him, you ſay nothing; if you ſpeak in this manner, you would ſpeak the language of faith, and that of a penitent king, who, contemplating his repeated relapſes, and no longer daring to ſpeak to his God in prayer, ſaid, "Lord, I am troubled, I am bowed down "greatly; I go mourning all the day long: for mine ini- "quities are gone over my head, as an heavy burden they "are too heavy for me. My heart panteth, my ſtrength "faileth me; for I will declare mine iniquity, I will be "ſorry for my ſin. Forſake me not, O Lord: O my "God! be not far from me. Make haſte to help me, O "Lord my ſalvation." Such is the ſilence of compunction which forms before God the true prayer.

But to complain that you have no longer any thing to ſay, when you wiſh to pray: Alas! My dear hearer, when you preſent yourſelf before God, do your paſt crimes hold out nothing for you to dread from his judgments, or to aſk from his mercy? What! your whole life has perhaps been only a ſink of debaucheries; you have perverted every thing, grace, your talents, your reaſon, your wealth, your dignities, all creatures; you have paſſed the beſt part of your days in the neglect of your God, and in all the deluſions of the world and of the paſſions; you have vilified your heart by iniquitous attachments, defiled your body, diſordered your imagination, weakened your lights, and even extinguiſhed every happy diſpoſition which nature had

had placed in your ſoul; and the recollection of all this furniſhes you with nothing in the preſence of God! And it inſpires you with no idea of the method you ought to adopt, in having recourſe to him, in order to obtain his forgiveneſs of ſuch accumulated crimes? And you have nothing to ſay to a God whom you have ſo long offended? O man! Thy ſalvation, then, muſt either be without reſource, or thou muſt have other means of accompliſhing it than thoſe of the divine clemency and mercy.

But, my dear hearer, I go further. If you lead a Chriſtian life; if returned from the world and from pleaſures, you are at laſt entered into the ways of ſalvation, you are ſtill more unjuſt in complaining that you find nothing to ſay to the Lord in your prayers. What! The ſingular grace of having opened your eyes, of undeceiving you with regard to the world, and withdrawing you from the bottom of the abyſs; this bleſſing ſo rare, and denied to ſo many ſinners, doth it give riſe to no grateful feelings in your heart, when at his feet? Can this recollection leave you cold and inſenſible? Is nothing tender awakened by the preſence of your benefactor, you who pride yourſelf upon never having forgotten a benefit, and who pompouſly diſplay the feeling and the exceſs of your gratitude towards the creatures?

Beſides, if you feel thoſe endleſs tendencies, which in ſpite of your change of life, ſtill riſe up within you againſt the law of God; that difficulty which you ſtill have in doing well; that unfortunate inclination which you ſtill find within you towards evil; thoſe deſires of a more perfect virtue, which always turn out vain; thoſe reſolutions to which you are always faithleſs; thoſe opportunities, in which you find yourſelf the ſame; thoſe duties,

which

which always meet the ſame repugnance in your heart: in a word, if you feel that inexhauſtible fund of weakneſs and of corruption, which remains with you after your converſion, and which alarms ſo much your virtue, you will not only have ample matter to addreſs the Lord in prayer, but your whole life will be one continual prayer. All the dangers which ſhall threaten your weakneſs, all the accidents which ſhall ſhake your faith, all the objects which ſhall open afreſh the former wounds of your heart, all the inward emotions which ſhall prove that the man of ſin lives always within you, will lead you to look upwards to Him from whom alone you expect deliverance from them. As the apoſtle ſaid, every place will be to you a place of prayer; every thing will direct your attention to God, becauſe every thing will furniſh you with chriſtian reflections upon yourſelf.

Beſides, my dear hearer, even granting that your own neceſſities ſhould not be ſufficient to fill the void of your prayer, employ a portion of it with the evils of the church; with the diſſentions of the paſtors; with that ſpirit of ſchiſm and revolt which ſeems to be forming in the ſanctuary; with the relaxation of believers; with the depravity of manners; with the ſad progreſs of unbelief, and the diminution of faith among men. Lament over the ſcandals of which you are a continual witneſs; complain to the Lord, with the prophet, that all has forſaken him; that every one ſeeks his own intereſt; that even the ſalt of the earth hath become taſteleſs, and that piety has become a traffic. Entreat of the Lord, the conſummation of his elect, and the fulfilment of his deſigns upon his church; religious princes, faithful paſtors, humble and enlightened teachers, knowing and diſintereſted guides; peace to the churches;

churches; the extinction of error, and the return of all who have gone aſtray.

What more ſhall I add? Entreat the converſion of your relations, friends, enemies, protectors, and maſters; the converſion of thoſe ſouls to whom you have been a ſtumbling-block; of thoſe whom you have formerly eſtranged from piety through your deriſions and cenſures; of thoſe who perhaps owe their irreligion and freethinking ſolely to the impiety of your paſt diſcourſes; of thoſe of whom your examples or ſolicitations have formerly either perverted the virtue, or ſeduced the weakneſs. Is it poſſible that theſe great objects, at once ſo ſad and ſo intereſting, cannot furniſh attention to your mind, or ſome feeling to your heart? Every thing which ſurrounds you teaches you to pray; every object, every accident which you ſee around you, provides you with freſh opportunities of raiſing yourſelf to God; the world, retirement, the court, the righteous, the ſinful, the public and domeſtic occurrences, the misfortunes of ſome, and the proſperity of others; every thing, which meets your eyes, ſupplies you with ſubject of lamentation, of prayer, of thankſgiving. Every thing inſtructs your faith; every thing excites your zeal; all grieves your piety, and calls forth your gratitude; and, amid ſo many ſubjects of prayer, you cannot ſupply a ſingle inſtant of prayer! Surrounded with ſo many opportunities of raiſing yourſelf to God, you have nothing to ſay to him when you come to appear in his preſence? Ah! My brethren, how far removed muſt God be from an heart, which finds it ſuch a puniſhment to converſe with him, and how little muſt that maſter and friend be loved, to whom they never wiſh to ſpeak!

And

And behold the laſt and the principal cauſe of our incapacity in prayer. They know not how to pray and to ſpeak to their God, becauſe they do not love him. When the heart loves, it ſoon finds out how to communicate its feelings, and to affect the object of its love; it ſoon knows what it ought to ſay: Alas! it cannot expreſs all that it feels. Let us eſtabliſh regularity once more in our hearts, my brethren; let us ſubſtitute God in place of the world; then ſhall our heart be no longer a ſtranger before God. It is the irregularity of our affections, which is the ſole cauſe of our incapacity in prayer; eternal riches can never be fervently aſked, when they are not loved; truths can never be well meditated upon, when they are not reliſhed; and little can be ſaid to a God who is hardly known; favours which are not deſired, and freedom from paſſions which are not hated, can never be very urgently ſolicited; in a word, prayer is the language of love; and we know not how to pray, becauſe we not how to love.

But, as you will ſay, doth an inclination for prayer depend upon us? And how is it poſſible to pray, with diſguſts and wanderings of the mind, which are not to be conquered, and which render it inſupportable? Second pretext, drawn from the diſguſts and the difficulties of prayer.

PART II. One of the greateſt exceſſes of ſin, is undoubtedly that backwardneſs, and, I may ſay, that natural diſlike which we have to prayer. Man innocent, would have founded his whole delight in holding converſe with God: all creatures would have been as an open book, where we would have inceſſantly meditated upon his works and his wonders; the impreſſions of the ſenſes, under the command

command of reaſon, would never have been able to turn him aſide, in ſpite of himſelf, from the delight and the familiarity of his preſence; his whole life would have been one continued contemplation of the truth, and his whole happineſs in his innocence would have been founded on his continual communications with the Lord, and the certainty that he would never forſake him.

Man muſt therefore be highly corrupted, and ſin muſt have made ſtrange alterations in us, to turn into a puniſhment what ought to be our happineſs: It is however only too true, that we almoſt all bear in our nature this backwardneſs, and this diſlike to prayer; and upon theſe is founded the moſt univerſal pretext, which is oppoſed to the diſcharge of this duty, ſo eſſential to chriſtian piety. Even perſons, to whom the habit of prayer ought to be rendered more pleaſing and more familiar, by the practice of virtue, continually complain of the diſguſts and of the conſtant wanderings which they experience in this holy exerciſe; inſomuch that, looking upon it either as a wearieſome duty, or as a loſt trouble, they abridge its length, and think themſelves happily quit of a yoke and of a ſlavery, when this moment of wearineſs and reſtraint is over.

Now, I ſay, that nothing is more unrighteous than to eſtrange ourſelves from prayer, on account of the diſguſts and wanderings of the mind, which render it painful and diſagreeable to us; for theſe diſguſts and wanderings originate, 1ſt, From our lukewarmneſs and our infidelities; or, 2dly, In our being little accuſtomed to prayer; or, 3dly, In the wiſdom even of God, who tries us, and who wiſhes to purify our heart, by withholding for a time the ſenſible conſolations of prayer.

Yes,

Yes, my brethren, the firſt, and the moſt common ſource of the diſguſts and the dryneſs of our prayers, is the lukewarmneſs and the infidelity of our life. It is, in effect, an injuſtice, to pretend that we can bring to prayer a ſerene and tranquil mind; a cool imagination, free from all the vain phantoms by which it is agitated; an heart affected with, and diſpoſed to reliſh the preſence of its God, while our whole life, though otherwiſe virtuous in the eyes of man, ſhall be one continual diſſipation; while we ſhall continue to live among objects the moſt calculated to move the imagination, and to make thoſe lively impreſſions on us which are never done away; in a word, while we ſhall preſerve a thouſand iniquitous attachments in our heart, which, though not abſolutely criminal in our eyes, yet trouble, divide, and occupy us, and which weaken in us, or even totally deprive us of any reliſh for God, and the things of heaven.

Alas! my brethren, if the moſt retired and the moſt holy ſouls; if the moſt recluſe penitents, purified by long retreat and by a life altogether devoted to heaven, ſtill found in the ſole remembrance of their paſt manners diſagreeable images, which forced their way even into their ſolitude, to diſturb the comfort and the tranquillity of their prayers; do we expect that in a life, regular I confeſs, but full of agitations, of occaſions by which we are led away, of objects which unſettle us, of temptations which diſquiet, of pleaſures which enervate, of fears and hopes which agitate us, we ſhall find ourſelves, in prayer, all of a ſudden new men, purified from all thoſe images which fully our mind, freed from all thoſe attachments which come to divide, and perhaps to corrupt our heart, in tranquillity from all thoſe agitations which continually make ſuch violent and ſuch dangerous impreſſions upon our

ſoul; and that, forgetting for a moment the entire world, and all thoſe vain objects which we have ſo lately quitted, and which we ſtill bear in our remembrance and in our heart, we ſhall, all of a ſudden, find ourſelves raiſed, before God, to the meditation of heavenly things, penetrated with love for eternal riches, filled with compunction for innumerable infidelities which we ſtill love, and with a tranquillity of mind and of heart, which the profoundeſt retirement, and the moſt rigorous ſeclusion from the world, frequently do not beſtow? Ah! my brethren, how unjuſt we are, and into what terrible reproaches againſt ourſelves ſhall the continual complaints made by us againſt the duties of piety one day be turned!

And to go farther into this truth, and to enter into a detail, which renders it more evident to you; you complain, in the firſt place, that your mind, incapable of a moment's attention in prayer, wanders from it, and flies off in ſpite of yourſelf. But how can it be otherwiſe, or how can you find it attentive and collected, if every thing you do takes off its attention and unſettles it; if in the detail of conduct you never recollect yourſelf; if you never accuſtom yourſelf to that mental reflection, to that life of faith, which, even amid the diſſipations of the world, finds ample ſources of holy reflections? To have a collected mind in prayer, you muſt bring it along with you; it is neceſſary that even your intercourſe with ſinners, when obliged to live among them, the ſight of their paſſions, of their anxieties, fears, hopes, joys, chagrins, and wretchedneſs, ſupply your faith with reflections, and turn your views towards God, who alone beſtows collection of mind and the tranquillity of prayer. Then, even on quitting the world and thoſe worldly converſations, where duty alone ſhall have engaged your preſence, you will find no difficulty in going

ing to recollect yourſelf before God, and in forgetting at his feet thoſe vain agitations which you have ſo lately witneſſed. On the contrary, the deſigns of faith which you ſhall there have preſerved; the blindneſs of the worldly, which you ſhall there have inwardly deplored, will cauſe you to find new comforts at the feet of Jeſus Chriſt; you will there, with conſolation, recreate yourſelf from the wearineſs of diſſipation and of worldly nothings; you will lament, with increaſed ſatisfaction, over the folly of men who ſo madly purſue after a vapour, a chimerical happineſs, which eludes their graſp, and which it is impoſſible ever to attain, for the world in which they ſeek it cannot beſtow it; you will there more warmly thank the Lord for having with ſo much goodneſs, and notwithſtanding your crimes, enlightened and diſcerned you from that multitude which muſt periſh; you will there ſee, as in a new light, the happineſs of thoſe ſouls who ſerve him, and whoſe eyes being opened upon vanity, no longer live but for the truth.

2*dly*, You complain that your heart, inſenſible in prayer, feels nothing fervent for its God, but, on the contrary, a diſguſt which renders it inſupportable. But how is it poſſible that your heart, wholly engroſſed with the things of the earth, filled with iniquitous attachments, inclination for the world, love of yourſelf, ſchemes for exalting your ſtation, and deſires perhaps of pleaſing; how is it poſſible, I ſay, that your heart, compounded with ſo many earthly affections, ſhould ſtill have any feeling for the things of heaven? It is wholly filled with the creatures; where then ſhould God find his place in it? We cannot love both God and the world. Thus, when the Iſraelites had paſſed the Jordan, and had eaten of the fruits of the earth, "the manna ceaſed on the morrow after they had

"eaten

"eaten of the old corn of the land, neither had the children "of Iſrael manna any more;" as if to ſhew that they could not enjoy at the ſame time both the heavenly nouriſhment, and that of the earth.

Love of the world, ſaid St Auguſtin, like a dangerous fever, ſheds an univerſal bitterneſs through the heart, which renders the inviſible and eternal riches inſipid and diſguſting to us. Thus, you never come to prayer, but with an inſurmountable diſguſt: Ah! It is a proof that your heart is diſeaſed: that a ſecret fever, and perhaps unknown to yourſelf, cauſes it to languiſh, ſaps and diſguſts it; that it is engroſſed by a foreign love. Mount to the ſource of your diſguſts towards God, and every thing connected with him, and ſee if they ſhall not be found in the iniquitous attachments of your heart; ſee if you are not ſtill a ſlave to yourſelf, to the vain cares of dreſs, to frivolous friendſhips, to dangerous animoſities, to ſecret envies, to deſires of rank, to every thing around you: theſe are the ſource of the evil: apply the remedy to it; take ſomething every day upon yourſelf; labour ſeriouſly towards purifying your heart; you will then taſte the comforts and the conſolations of prayer; then, the world no longer engroſſing your affections, you will find your God more worthy of being loved: we ſoon ardently love the only object of our love.

And, after all, render glory here to the truth: Is it not true, that the days in which you have been more guarded upon yourſelf; the days in which you have made ſome ſacrifices to the Lord, of your inclinations, of your indolence, of your temper, of your averſions; is it not true that, in theſe days, you have addreſſed your prayers to the Lord, with more peace, more conſolation, and more delight?

light ? We encounter, with double pleaſure, the eyes of a maſter, to whom we have lately given ſome ſtriking proof of fidelity; on the contrary, we are in pain before him, when we feel that he has cauſe of a thouſand juſt reproaches againſt us; we are then anxious and under reſtraint; we endeavour to hide ourſelves from his view, like the firſt ſinner; we no longer addreſs him with that overflowing heart, and that confidence, which a conſcience pure and void of offence inſpires; and the moments when we are under the neceſſity of ſupporting his divine preſence, are anxiouſly counted.

Thus, when Jeſus Chriſt commands us to pray, he begins with ordering us to watch. He thereby means us to underſtand that vigilance is the only preparation to prayer; that to love to pray, it is neceſſary to watch; and that fondneſs for and conſolations in prayer, are granted only to the recollection and to the ſacrifices of vigilance. I know that, if you do not pray, you can never watch over yourſelf and live holily; but I likewiſe know, that, if you exert not that vigilance which cauſes to live holily, you can never pray with comfort and with conſolation. Prayer, it is true, obtains for us the grace of vigilance; but it is yet more true, that vigilance alone can draw down upon us the gift and the uſage of the prayer.

And from thence, it is eaſy to conclude, that a life of the world, even granting it to be the moſt innocent; that is to ſay, a life of pleaſure, continual gaming, diſſipation, and theatrical amuſements, which you call ſo innocent, when attended with no other harm, than that of diſqualifying you for prayer; when this worldly life, which you ſo ſtrongly juſtify, ſhould contain nothing more criminal, than that of diſguſting you at prayer, of drying up your heart,

heart, of unſettling your imagination, of weakening your faith, and of filling your mind with anxiety and trouble; when we ſhould judge of the ſecurity of this ſtate merely from what you continually tell us, that you are incapable of arranging yourſelf for prayer, and that, on your part, it is always attended with an inſupportable diſguſt and wearineſs; I ſay, that for theſe reaſons alone, the moſt innocent worldly life is a life of ſin and reprobation; a life for which there is no ſalvation; for ſalvation is promiſed ſolely to prayer; ſalvation is not attainable, but through the aid of prayer; ſalvation is granted only to perſeverance in prayer; conſequently, every life which places an invincible obſtacle in the way of prayer can have no pretenſions to ſalvation. Now, you are fully ſenſible yourſelves, my brethren, that a life of diſſipation, of gaming, of pleaſure, and of public places, puts an eſſential obſtacle in the way of prayer; that it places in your heart, in your imagination, in your ſenſes, an invincible diſguſt at prayer, an unſettledneſs incompatible with the ſpirit of prayer; you continually complain of this; you even make uſe of it as a pretext not to pray; and from thence be aſſured that there is no ſalvation for the worldly life, even the moſt innocent; for, wherever prayer is impoſſible, ſalvation muſt likewiſe be ſo. Firſt reaſon of the diſguſts and of the wanderings of our prayers; the lukewarmneſs and the infidelity of our life.

The ſecond is, our little uſage of prayer. We pray with diſguſt, becauſe we ſeldom pray. For, *1ſtly*, It is the practice alone of prayer which will gradually calm your mind, which will inſenſibly baniſh from it the images of the world and of vanity, which will diſperſe all thoſe clouds which produce all the diſguſts and the wanderings of your prayers. *2dly*, You muſt aſk for a long time before

fore you can obtain; you muſt preſs, ſolicit, and even importune; the ſweets and the conſolations of prayer are the fruit and the reward of prayer itſelf. 3*dly*, There muſt be familiarity, in order to find pleaſure in it. If you ſeldom pray, the Lord will be a ſtrange and an unknown God to you, as I may ſay, before whom you will feel yourſelf embarraſſed, and under a kind of reſtraint; with whom you will never experience thoſe overflowings of heart, that ſweet confidence, that holy freedom, which familiarity alone beſtows, and which conſtitute the whole pleaſure of the divine intercourſe. God requires to be known, in order to be loved. The world loſes by being examined; the ſurface, and the firſt glance of it, are alone ſmiling. Search deeper, and it is no longer but emptineſs, vanity, anxious care, agitation, and miſery. But the Lord muſt be taſted, ſays the prophet, in order to feel how good he is. The more you know, the more you love him; the more you unite yourſelf to him, the more do you feel that there is no true happineſs on the earth, but that of knowing and of loving him.

It is the uſe, therefore, of prayer, which alone can render prayer pleaſing. Thus we ſee, that the generality of perſons who complain of the diſguſts and of the wanderings of their prayers, ſeldom pray; think this important duty fulfilled, when they have beſtowed upon the Lord a few haſty moments of thoughtleſſneſs and reſtraint; forſake it on the firſt ſymptoms of diſguſt; make no exertion to reduce and to familiariſe their mind to it; and far from conſidering prayer as being rendered only more neceſſary to them, by their invincible repugnance to it, they regard that very repugnance as a legal excuſe, which diſpenſes them altogether from it.

But

But how find time in the world, you will ſay, to make ſo long and ſo frequent an uſe of prayer? You, my dear hearer, not find time to pray? But wherefore is time given to you, but to entreat of God to forget your crimes, to look upon you with eyes of compaſſion, and to place you one day among the number of his holy! You have not time to pray? But you have not time, then, to be a Chriſtian? For, a man who prays not, is a man who has no God, no worſhip, and no hope. You have not time to pray? But prayer is the beginning of all good; and if you do not pray, you have not yet performed a ſingle work for eternal life. Ah! my brethren, is time ever wanting to ſolicit the favours of the earth, to importune the maſter, to beſiege thoſe who are in place, to beſtow upon pleaſure, or upon idleneſs? What uſeleſs moments! What languid and tireſome days, through the mere gloom which ever accompanies idleneſs! What time loſt in vain ceremonials, in idle converſations, in boundleſs gaming, in fruitleſs ſubjections, in graſping at chimeras which move farther and farther from us! Great God! And time is wanted to aſk heaven of thee, to appeaſe thy wrath, and to ſupplicate thine eternal mercies! How humbly, O my God, muſt ſalvation be eſtimated, when time is wanted to entreat of thy mercy to ſave us! And how much are we to be deplored, to find ſo many moments for the world, and to be unable to find a ſingle one for eternity! Second cauſe of the diſguſts, and of the wanderings of our prayers; the little uſe of prayer itſelf.

It is true, my brethren, that this reaſon is not ſo general, but what ſouls, the moſt faithful to prayer, are often ſeen to experience all thoſe diſguſts and thoſe wanderings of which I ſpeak: but I ſay, that theſe diſguſts proceed from

from the wiſdom of God, who means to purify them, and who leads them by that path, only in order to fulfil his eternal deſigns of mercy upon them; laſt reaſon; that conſequently, far from being repulſed by what they find gloomy and diſagreeable in prayer, they ought to perſevere in it, with even more fidelity, than if the Lord had ſhed upon them the moſt abundant and the moſt ſenſible conſolations.

1*ſtly*, Becauſe you ought to conſider theſe diſguſts as the juſt puniſhment of your paſt infidelities. Is it not reaſonable, that God make you expiate the criminal voluptuouſneſs of your worldly life by the diſguſts and the ſorrows of piety? Weakneſs of temperament does not perhaps permit you, to puniſh, by corporeal ſufferings, the licentiouſneſs of your paſt manners; is it not juſt that God ſupply that, by the puniſhment, and the inward afflictions of the mind? Would you pretend to paſs in an inſtant from the pleaſures of the world to thoſe of grace; from the viands of Egypt, to the milk and honey of the land of promiſe, without the Lord having firſt made you to undergo the barrenneſs and the fatigues of the deſert; and, in a word, that he ſhould not chaſtiſe the delights, If I may venture to ſay ſo, of guilt, but by thoſe of virtue.

2*dly*, You have ſo long refuſed yourſelf to God, in ſpite of the moſt lively inſpirations of his grace, which recalled you to the truth and to the light; you have ſo long ſuffered him to knock at the gate of your heart before you opened it to him; you have diſputed, ſtruggled againſt, wavered, deferred ſo much, before you gave yourſelf to him; is it not juſt that he leave you to ſolicit for ſome time before he give himſelf to you with all the conſolations of his grace? The delays and the tarryings of the Lord are the juſt puniſhment of your own.

But, even admitting theſe reaſons to be leſs weighty, how do you know if the Lord thereby mean not to render this exilement and this ſeparation in which we live from him more hateful to you, and to increaſe the fervency of your longings for that immortal country where truth, ſeen in open day, will always appear lovely, becauſe we ſhall ſee it ſuch as it is? How do you know if he thereby mean not to inſpire you with new compunction for your paſt crimes, by making you ſenſible, at every moment, of the contrariety and diſguſt which they have left in your heart to the truth and to righteouſneſs? Laſtly, How do you know, if the Lord mean not, by theſe diſguſts, to perfect the purification of what may as yet be too human in your piety? If he mean not to eſtabliſh your virtue upon that truth which is always the ſame, and not upon inclination and fancy, which inceſſantly change; upon rules which are eternal, and not upon conſolations which are tranſitory; upon faith which never fails to ſacrifice the viſible for the inviſible riches, and not upon feeling which leaves to the world almoſt the ſame empire that grace hath over your heart? A piety wholly of fancy goes a ſhort way, if not ſuſtained and confirmed by the truth. It is dangerous to let our fidelity depend upon the feeling diſpoſitions of an heart which is never an inſtant the ſame, and upon which every object makes new impreſſions. The duties which only pleaſe when they conſole, do not pleaſe long; and that virtue which is ſolely founded on fancy, can never ſuſtain itſelf, becauſe it reſts only upon ourſelves.

For, after all, if you ſeek only the Lord in your prayers, provided that the way by which he leads you conduct to him, it ought to matter little to you whether it be by that of diſguſts or of conſolations, for, being the ſureſt, it ought

ought always to appear preferable to all others. If you pray only to attract more aids from heaven in relief of your wants, or in ſupport of your weakneſs, faith teaching you that prayer, even when accompanied with thoſe diſguſts and thoſe dryneſſes, obtains the ſame favours, produces the ſame effects, and is equally acceptable to God, as that in which ſenſible conſolations are found: What do I ſay? that it may become even more agreeable to the Lord, through your acceptance of the difficulties which you there encounter; faith teaching you this, you ought to be equally faithful to prayer as if it held out the moſt ſenſible attractions, otherwiſe it would not be God whom you ſought, but yourſelves; it would not be eternal riches, but vain and fleeting conſolations; it would not be the remedies of faith, but the ſupports of your ſelf-love.

Thus, be whom you may who now liſten to me, imitate the woman of Canaan; be faithful to prayer, and in the fulfilment of this duty you will find all the reſt ſuſtained and rendered eaſy. If a ſinner, pray: it was through payer alone that the publican and the ſinful woman of the goſpel obtained ſeelings of compunction, and the grace of a thorough penitence; and prayer is the only ſource and the only path of righteouſneſs. If righteous, ſtill pray; perſeverance in faith and in piety is promiſed only to prayer; and by that it was that Job, that David, that Tobias perſevered to the end. If you live amid ſinners, and your duty does not permit you to withdraw yourſelf from the ſight of their irregularities and example, pray: the greater the dangers, the more neceſſary does prayer become; and the three children in the flames, and Jonah in the belly of a monſter, found ſafety only through prayer. If the engagements of your birth, or of your ſtation, attach you to the court of kings, pray: Eſther, in the court of Ahaſuerus,

rus, Daniel in that of Darius, the prophets in the palaces of the kings of Iſrael, were ſolely indebted to prayer for their life and ſalvation. If you live in retirement, pray: ſolitude itſelf becomes a rock, if a continual intercourſe with God does not defend us againſt ourſelves; and Judith, in the ſecrecy of her houſe, and the widow Ann in the temple, and the Anthonies in the deſert, found the fruit and the ſecurity of their retreat in prayer alone. If eſtabliſhed in the church for the inſtruction of the people, pray: all the power and all the ſucceſs of your miniſtry muſt depend upon your prayers; and the apoſtles converted the univerſe ſolely becauſe they had appropriated nothing to themſelves but prayer and the preaching of the goſpel. Laſtly, Be whom you may, I again repeat it, in proſperity, or in indigence, in joy or in affliction, in trouble or in peace, in fervency or in deſpondency, in luſt or in the ways of righteouſneſs, advanced in virtue, or ſtill in the firſt ſteps of penitence, pray: prayer is the ſafety of all ſtations, the conſolation of all ſorrows, the duty of all conditions, the ſoul of piety, the ſupport of faith, the grand foundation of religion, and all religion itſelf. O my God! ſhed then upon us that ſpirit of grace and of prayer which was to be the diſtinguiſhing mark of thy church, and the portion of a new people; and purify our hearts and our lips, that we may be enabled to offer up to thee pure homages, fervent ſighs, and prayers worthy of the eternal riches which thou haſt ſo often promiſed to thoſe who ſhall have well entreated them.

SERMON

SERMON XIV.

FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES.

MATTHEW v. 43.

Ye have heard that it hath been ſaid, Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy: But I ſay unto you, love your enemies.

IT is commonly believed that a degree of indulgence and caution had been uſed by the legiſlator of the Jews, in publiſhing the law on forgiveneſs of injuries, that obliged to accommodate it, in ſome reſpect, to the weakneſs of a carnal people, and otherwiſe perſuaded that, of all virtues, that of loving an enemy was the moſt difficult to the heart of man, he was ſatisfied with regulating and preſcribing bounds for revenge. It was only in order to prevent great exceſſes, ſays St. Auguſtin, that he meant to give authority to ſmaller ones. The law, like all the others, had its ſanctity, its goodneſs, its juſtice; but it was rather an eſtabliſhment of polity than a rule of piety. It was calculated to maintain the internal tranquillity of the ſtate; but it neither touched the heart, nor ſtruck at the root of hatreds and revenge. The only effect propoſed was either to reſtrain the aggreſſor, by threatening him with the ſame puniſhment with which he had grieved his brother, or to put a check upon

upon the irritation of the offended, by letting him ſee that, if he exceeded in the ſatisfaction required, he expoſed himſelf to undergo all the ſurplus of his revenge.

Philoſophers, in their morality, had alſo placed the forgiveneſs of injuries among the number of virtues; but that was a pretext of vanity, rather than the rule of diſcipline. It is becauſe revenge ſeemed to them to carry along with it ſomething, I know not what, of mean and paſſionate, which would have disfigured the portrait, and the proud tranquillity of their ſage: that it appeared diſgraceful to them to be unable to riſe ſuperior to an injury. The forgiveneſs of their enemies was ſolely founded, therefore, upon the contempt in which they held them. They avenged themſelves by diſdaining revenge; and pride readily gave up the pleaſure of hurting thoſe who have injured us, for the pleaſure which was found in deſpiſing them.

But the law of the goſpel, upon loving our enemies, neither flatters pride nor ſpares ſelf-love. In the forgiveneſs of injuries nothing ought to indemnify the Chriſtian, but the conſolation of imitating Jeſus Chriſt, and of obeying him; but the claims, which, in an enemy, prove to him a brother; but the hope of meeting, before the Eternal Judge, with the ſame indulgence which he ſhall have uſed towards men. Nothing ought to limit him in his charity, but charity itſelf, which hath no bounds, which excepts neither places, times, nor perſons, which ought never to be extinguiſhed. And, ſhould the religion of Chriſtians have no other proof againſt unbelief than the ſublime elevation of this maxim, it would always have this pre-eminence in ſanctity, and conſequently in apparent truth over all the ſects which have ever appeared upon the earth.

Let

Let us unfold, therefore, the motives and the rules of this eſſential point of the law: the motives, by eſtabliſhing the equity of the precept through the very pretexts which ſeem to oppoſe it; the rules, by laying open the illuſions under which every one juſtifies to himſelf their infractions: that is to ſay, the injuſtice of our hatreds, and the falſity of our reconciliations.

PART I. The three principles which uſually bind men to each other, and by which are formed all human unions and friendſhips, are fancy, cupidity, and vanity. Fancy. We follow a certain propenſity of nature, which being the cauſe of our finding, in ſome perſons, a greater ſimilarity to our own inclinations, perhaps alſo greater allowances for our faults, binds us to them, and occaſions us to find, in their ſociety, a comfort which becomes wearineſs in that of the reſt of men. Cupidity. We ſeek out uſeful friends; from the moment that they are neceſſary to our pleaſure or to our fortune, they become worthy of our friendſhip; intereſt is a grand charm to the majority of hearts; the titles which render us powerful, are quickly tranſmuted into qualities which render us apparently amiable, and friends are never wanting, when we can pay the friendſhip of thoſe who love us. Laſtly. Vanity. Friends who do us honour are always dear to us; it would ſeem that, in loving them, we enter, as it were, into partnerſhip with them, in that diſtinction which they enjoy in the world; we ſeek to deck ourſelves, as I may ſay, with their reputation; and, being unable to reach their merit, we pride ourſelves in their ſociety, in order to have it ſuppoſed that, at leaſt, there is not much betwixt us, and that like loves like.

Theſe are the three great ties of human ſociety. Religion and charity unite almoſt nobody; and from thence it is,

is, that from the moment men offend our fancy, that they are unfavourable to our intereſts, or that they wound our reputation and our vanity, the human and brittle ties which united us to them are broken aſunder; our heart withdraws from them, and no longer finds in itſelf, with reſpect to them, but animoſity and bitterneſs. And behold the three moſt general ſources of thoſe hatreds which men nouriſh againſt each other; which change all the ſweets of ſociety into endleſs inveteracies; which empoiſon all the delight of converſations, and all the innocency of mutual intercourſe; and which, attacking religion in the heart, nevertheleſs preſent themſelves to us under appearances of equity, which juſtify them in our eyes, and ſtrengthen us in them.

I ſay, from the moment that men offend our fancy; and this is the firſt pretext, and the firſt ſource of our withdrawing from, and of our hatreds againſt our brethren. You ſay that you cannot accord with ſuch a perſon; that every thing in him offends and diſpleaſes you; that it is an antipathy which you cannot conquer; that all his manners ſeem faſhioned to irritate you; that to ſee him would anſwer the ſole purpoſe of augmenting the natural averſion which you have to him; and that nature hath placed within us hatreds and likings, conformities and averſions, for which ſhe alone is to be anſwerable.

To this I might at once anſwer, by eſtabliſhing the foundations of the Chriſtian doctrine upon loving our brethren: Is that man, in conſequence of diſpleaſing, and being diſagreeable to your fancy, leſs your brother, child of God, citizen of Heaven, member of Jeſus Chriſt, and inheritor of the eternal promiſes? Doth his humour, his character, whatever it may be, efface any one of thoſe auguſt tracts which he hath received upon the ſacred font, which unite

which unite him to you by divine and immortal ties, and which ought to render him dear and reſpectable to you? When Jeſus Chriſt commands us to love our brethren as ourſelves, doth he mean to make a precept which coſts nothing to the heart, and in the fulfilment of which we found neither difficulty nor hardſhip? Ah! What occaſion had he to command us to love our brethren, if, in virtue of that commandment, we were obliged to love only thoſe for whom we feel a natural fancy and inclination. The heart hath no occaſion, on this point, for precept; it is its own law. The precept then ſuppoſes a difficulty on our part: Jeſus Chriſt hath, therefore, foreſeen, that it would be hard upon us to love our brethren; that we ſhould find within us antipathies and diſlikes which would withdraw us from them; and behold why he hath attached ſo much merit to the obſervance of this ſingle point, and hath ſo often declared to us that, to obſerve it, was to obſerve the whole law. Averſion to our brethren, far then from juſtifying our eſtrangement from them, renders to us, on the contrary, the obligation of loving them more preciſe, and places us perſonally in the caſe of the precept.

But beſides, ought a Chriſtian to be regulated by fancy and humour, or by the principles of reaſon, of faith, of religion, and of grace? And ſince when is the natural fancy, which we are commanded by the goſpel to oppoſe, become a privilege which diſpenſes us from its rules? If the repugnance felt for duties were a title of exemption, where is the believer who would not be quit of the whole law, and who would not find his juſtification and his innocency, in proportion as he felt a greater degree of corruption in his heart? Are our fancies our law? Is religion only the ſupport, and not the remedy of nature? Is it not a weakneſs, even in the eyes of the world, to regulate our

ſteps and our ſentiments, our hatreds and our love towards men, merely upon the caprices of a fancy for which we can give no reaſon ourſelves? Do men of this deſcription do great credit, I do not ſay to religion, but to humanity? And are they not, even to the world itſelf, a ſpectacle of contempt, of deriſion, and of cenſure? What a chaos would ſociety be, if fancy alone were to decide upon our duties, and upon reciprocal attentions, and if men were to be united by no other law? Now, if the rules even of ſociety, exact, that fancy alone be not the ſole principle of our conduct towards the reſt of men, ſhould the goſpel be more indulgent on that point? The goſpel, which preaches only ſelf-denial; which every where commands us to do violence upon ourſelves, and to ſtrive againſt our fancies and our affections; which demands that we act through views ſuperior to fleſh and blood, and that we heſitate not to ſacrifice to the ſanctity of faith, and to the ſublimity of its rules, not only our caprices, but our moſt legal inclinations.

It is therefore abſurd, to alledge to us an averſion to your brother, which is itſelf your guilt. I might further ſay: You complain that your brother is diſpleaſing to you, and that it is not poſſible for you to bear with, or to be in agreement with him; but do you ſuppoſe, that you yourſelf are diſpleaſing to none? Can you guarantee to us, that you are univerſally liked, and that every one applauds and approves you? Now, if you exact, that every thing offenſive in your manners be excuſed, upon the goodneſs of your heart, and on account of thoſe eſſential qualities upon which you pride yourſelf; if to you, it appear unreaſonable to be offended at nothings, and by certain ſallies of which we cannot always command; if you inſiſt upon being judged by the conſequence, by the groundwork,

work, by the rectitude of your ſentiments and conduct, and not in conſequence of thoſe humours which ſometimes involuntarily eſcape you, and upon which it is very difficult to be always guarded againſt one's ſelf: have the ſame equity for your brother; apply the ſame rule to yourſelf; bear with him as you have occaſion to be borne with your ſelf; and do not juſtify by your eſtrangement from him, the unjuſt averſions which may be had to yourſelf. And this rule is ſo much the more equitable, as that you have only to caſt your eyes upon what is continually paſſing in the world, to be convinced that thoſe who are loudeſt in trumpeting forth the faults of their brethren, are the very perſons with whom nobody can agree, who are the peſts of ſocieties, and a grievance to the reſt of men.

And I might here demand of you, my dear hearer, if this principle of contrariety, which renders your brother ſo inſupportable to you, be not more in yourſelf, that is to ſay, in your pride, in the capriciouſneſs of your temper, in the contrariety of your character, than in this; demand of you, if all the world ſee in him what you believe to ſee yourſelf; if his friends, his relations, his intimates look upon him with the ſame eyes that you do? What do I know! I might demand of you, if that which diſpleaſes you in him, be not perhaps his good qualities: if his talents, his reputation, his credit and his fortune, have not perhaps a greater ſhare in your averſion, than his faults; and if it be not his merit or his rank which have hitherto in your ſight conſtituted his whole crime. We are ſo eaſily deceived in this point! Envy is a paſſion ſo maſked, and ſo artful in diſguiſing itſelf! As there is ſomething mean and raſcally in it, and as it is a ſecret confeſſion made to ourſelves of our own mediocrity, it always ſhews itſelf to us under foreign outſides, which completely conceal

ceal it from us; but fathom your heart, and you will ſee that all thoſe, who either ſurpaſs, or who ſhine with too much luſtre near you, have the misfortune to diſpleaſe you; that you find amiable, only thoſe who have nothing to conteſt with you; that all who riſe above, or are even equal to you, conſtrain and hurt you; and that to have a claim to your friendſhip, it is neceſſary to have none either to your pretenſions or expectancies.

But I go ſtill further, and I entreat you to liſten to me. I admit your brother to have more faults than even you accuſe him of having. Alas! You are ſo gentle and ſo friendly towards thoſe, from whom you expect your fortune and your eſtabliſhment, and whoſe temper, haughtineſs, and manners ſhock you! You bear with all their pride, their repulſes, their ſcorns; you ſwallow all their inequalities and caprices: You are never diſheartened; your patience is always greater than your antipathy and your repugnance, and you neglect nothing to pleaſe. Ah! If you regarded your brother, as he upon whom depends eternal ſalvation, as he to whom you are to be indebted, not for a fortune of dirt, and an uncertain eſtabliſhment, but for the fortune even of your eternity, would you follow, with regard to him, the caprice of your fancy? Would you not conquer the unjuſt antipathy which eſtranges you from him? Would you ſuffer ſo much in putting your inclinations in uniſon with your eternal intereſts, and in doing upon yourſelf ſo uſeful and ſo neceſſary a violence? You bear with every thing for the world and for vanity; and you cry out, how hard! from the moment that a ſingle painful proceeding is exacted of you for eternity.

And ſay not that there are caprices of nature, of which no account can be given, and that we are not the maſters of

of our fancies and likings. I grant this to a certain point; but there is a love of reaſon and of religion, which ought always to gain the day over that of nature. The goſpel exacts not that you have a fancy for your brother, it exacts that you love him; that is to ſay, that you bear with him, that you excuſe him, that you conceal his faults, that you ſerve him; in a word, that you do for him whatever you would wiſh to have done for yourſelf. Charity is not a blind and capricious fancy, a natural liking, a ſympathy of temper and diſpoſition; it is a juſt, enlightened, and reaſonable duty; a love which takes its riſe in the impulſes of grace, and in the views of faith. It is not rightly loving our brethren, to love them only through fancy; it is loving one's ſelf. Charity alone enables us to love them as we ought, and it alone can form real and ſtedfaſt friends. For fancy is continually changing, and charity never dieth; fancy ſeeks only itſelf, and charity ſeeketh not its own intereſts, but the intereſt of whom it loves; fancy is not proof againſt every thing, a loſs, a proceeding, a diſgrace, and charity riſeth ſuperior to death: fancy loves only its own conveniency; and charity findeth nothing amiſs, and ſuffereth every thing for whom it loveth; fancy is blind, and often renders even the vices of our brethren amiable to us; and charity never giveth praiſe to iniquity, and in others loveth only the truth. The friends of grace are therefore much more to be relied on than thoſe of nature. The ſame fancy which unites the manners, is often, a moment after, the cauſe of ſeparating them; but the ties formed by charity, eternally endure.

Such is the firſt ſource of our likings and of our hatreds, the injuſtices and the capriciouſneſs of our fancy. Intereſt is the ſecond: for nothing is more common than to hear you juſtifying your animoſities, by telling us that ſuch

ſuch a man hath neglected nothing to ruin you; that he has been the mean of blaſting your fortune; that he continually excites vexatious matters againſt you; that you find him an inſuperable impediment in your way, and that it is difficult to love an enemy ſo bent on injuring you.

But granting that you ſpeak the truth, I anſwer to you: to all the other ills which your brother hath cauſed to you, why ſhould you add that of hating him, which is the greateſt of all, ſince all the others have tended to raviſh from you only fleeting and frivolous riches, while this is the cauſe of ruin to your ſoul, and deprives you for ever of your claim to an immortal kingdom? In hating him, you injure yourſelf much more than all his malignity with reſpect to you could ever do: he hath uſurped the patrimony of your fathers; it may be ſo; and, in order to avenge yourſelf, you renounce the inheritance of the heavenly Father, and the eternal patrimony of Jeſus Chriſt. You take your revenge then upon yourſelf; and, in order to conſole yourſelf for the ills done to you by your brother, you provide for yourſelf one without end and without meaſure.

And moreover, Does your hatred towards your brother reſtore any of thoſe advantages which he hath ſnatched from you? Does it meliorate your condition? What do you reap from your animoſity and your rancour? In hating him, you ſay that you conſole yourſelf; and this is the only conſolation left to you. What a conſolation, great God! is that of hatred, that is to ſay, of a gloomy and furious paſſion, which gnaws the heart, ſheds anguiſh and ſorrow through ourſelves, and begins by puniſhing and rendering us miſerable! What a cruel pleaſure is that of hating, that is to ſay, of bearing on the heart a load of rancour

rancour, which empoiſons every moment of life! What a barbarous method of conſoling one's ſelf! And are you not worthy of pity, to ſeek a reſource in your evils, which anſwers no purpoſe but that of eterniſing, by hatred, a tranſitory injury?

But let us ceaſe this human language, and ſpeak that of the goſpel, to which our mouths are conſecrated. If you were Chriſtian, my dear hearer; if you had not loſt faith, far from hating thoſe whom God hath made inſtrumental in blaſting your hopes and your projects of fortune, you would regard them as the inſtruments of God's mercies upon your ſoul, as the miniſters of your ſanctification, and the bleſſed rocks which have been the means of ſaving you from ſhipwreck. You would have been loſt in credit and in elevation; you would then have neglected your God; your ambition would have increaſed with your fortune, and death would have ſurpriſed you in the vortex of the world of paſſions, and of human expectancies. But, in order to ſave your ſoul, the Lord, in his great mercy, hath raiſed up obſtacles which have ſtopt your courſe. He hath employed an envious perſon, a rival to ſupplant you, to keep you at a diſtance from favours, and to place himſelf betwixt you and the precipice, into which you was running headlong, for ever to periſh: He hath ſeconded, as I may ſay, his ambition; he hath favoured his deſigns; and, through an incomprehenſible exceſs of goodneſs towards you, he hath croſſed your worldly ſchemes: He hath raiſed up your enemy in time, in order to ſave you in eternity. You ought therefore to adore the eternal deſigns of his juſtice and of his mercy upon men; to conſider your brother as the bleſſed cauſe of your ſalvation: to entreat of God, that, ſeeing his ambition or his bad intentions have been employed to ſave you, he may inſpire him with

with ſincere repentance, and that the perſon who hath been the inſtrument of your ſalvation be not permitted to periſh himſelf.

Yes, my brethren, our hatreds proceed entirely from our want of faith. Alas! if we regarded every thing which paſſes, as a vapour without ſubſtance; if we were thoroughly convinced that all this is nothing, that ſalvation is the great and important affair, and that our treaſure and our true riches are only in eternity, where, in the twinkling of an eye, we ſhall be; if we were convinced of it, alas! we would conſider men, who paſſionately quarrel and diſpute with each other, for the dignities of the earth, as children who fall out among themſelves for the play-things which amuſe their eye, whoſe childiſh hatreds and animoſities turn upon nothings, which infancy alone, and the feeble ſtate of reaſon magnify in their eyes. Tranquil on the greateſt and moſt important events, on the loſs of the patrimony of their fathers, and the fall of their family, and keen even to exceſs, when deprived of any of the little trifling objects which delight their infancy. Thus, O my God, fooliſh and puerile men feel not the loſs of their heavenly inheritance, of that immortal patrimony, bequeathed to them by Jeſus Chriſt, and which their brethren are already enjoying in heaven. They unconcernedly ſee the kingdom of God, and the only true riches paſs away from them; and like children, they are inflamed with rage, and mutually arm againſt each other, from the inſtant that their trivolous poſſeſſions are encroached upon, or that any attempt is made to deprive them of thoſe childiſh play-things, the only value or importance of which, is that of ſerving to deceive their feeble reaſon, and to amuſe their childhood.

For

For a Chriſtian, intereſt is therefore an unworthy and criminal pretext for his hatred towards his brethren; but vanity, which is their laſt reſource, is ſtill leſs excuſeable.

For, my brethren, we wiſh to be approved, and to have our faults as well as our virtues applauded; and although we feel our own weakneſſes, yet we are ſo unreaſonable, as to exact that others ſee them not, and that they even give credit to us for certain qualities, which we inwardly reproach to ourſelves as vices. We could wiſh that all mouths were filled ſolely with our praiſes; and that the world, which forgives nothing, which ſpares not even its maſters, ſhould admire in us what it cenſures in others.

In effect, you complain, that your enemy hath both privately and publicly decried you; that he hath added calumny to ſlander; that he hath attacked you in the tendereſt and moſt feeling quarter, and that he hath neglected nothing to blaſt your honour and your reputation in the opinion of men.

But, before replying to this, I might firſt ſay to you, miſtruſt the reports which have been made to you of your brother; the moſt innocent ſpeeches reach us ſo empoiſoned, through the malignity of the tongues which have conveyed them; there are ſo many mean flatterers, who ſeek to be agreeable at the expence of thoſe who are not ſo; there are ſo many dark and wicked minds, whoſe only pleaſure is in finding out evil where none is meant, and in ſowing diſſention among men; there are ſo many volatile and imprudent characters, who unſeaſonably, and with an envenomed air, repeat what at firſt had been only ſaid with the moſt innocent intentions; there are ſo many men, naturally given to the hyperbole, and in whoſe mouth every

thing is magnified, and departs from the natural and ſimple truth; I here appeal to yourſelf. Has it never happened to you, that your moſt innocent ſayings have been empoiſoned, and circumſtances added to your recitals, which you had never even thought of? Have you not then exclaimed againſt the injuſtice and the malignity of the repeaters? Why might not you, in your turn, been deceived? And if every thing which paſſes through a variety of channels, be in general adulterated, and never reach us in its original purity, why ſhould you ſuppoſe that diſcourſes, which relate to you alone, were exempted from the ſame lot, and were entitled to more attention and belief?

You will no doubt reply, that theſe general maxims are not the point in queſtion, and that the actions of which you complain, are not doubtful, but poſitive. I admit it; and I aſk if your brother have not on his ſide, the ſame reproaches to make to you; if you have always been very lenient and very charitable to his faults; if you have always rendered juſtice, even to his good qualities; if you have never permitted him to be reviled in your preſence; if you have not aided the malignity of ſuch diſcourſes by an affected moderation, which hath only tended to blow up the fire of detraction, and to ſupply new traits againſt your brother; I aſk you, if you are even circumſpect towards the reſt of men; if you readily forgive the weakneſs of others; if your tongue be not in general, dipt in wormwood and gall; if the beſt eſtabliſhed reputation, be not always in danger in your hands; and, if the ſaddeſt and moſt private hiſtories, do not ſpeedily become matter of notoriety, through your malignity and imprudence; O man! Thou puſheſt delicacy and ſenſibility to ſuch lengths, upon whatever regards thyſelf! We have occaſion for all the terror of our miniſtry, and for all the other moſt weighty

weighty inducements of religion, to bring thee to forgive to thy brother, a ſingle ſpeech, frequently a word which imprudence, which chance, which circumſtances, which perhaps a juſt reſentment hath forced from him; and the licentiouſneſs of thy diſcourſes towards others, knows neither the bonds of politeneſs, nor that of decency which the world itſelf preſcribes.

But, granting that you have nothing to reproach yourſelf on the part of moderation towards your brother. What do you gain by hating him? Do you thereby efface the fatal impreſſions which his diſcourſes may have left on the minds of men? On the contrary, you inflict a freſh wound upon your heart; you give yourſelf a ſtab which carries death to your ſoul; you wrench the ſword from his hands, if I may ſpeak in this manner, in order to plunge it into yourſelf. By the innocency of your manners, and the integrity of your conduct, make the injuſtice of his diſcourſes evident: deſtroy, by a life free from reproach, the prejudices to which he may have given riſe againſt you: make the meanneſs and the iniquity of his calumnies revert upon himſelf, by the practice of thoſe virtues, exactly oppoſite to the faults which he imputes to you: ſuch is the juſt and legal manner of revenging yourſelf. Triumph over his malice, by your manners and by your ſilence: you will heap living coals upon his head; you will gain the public on your ſide; you will leave nothing to your enemy, but the infamy of his paſſion, and of his impoſitions. But hating him, is the revenge of the weak, and the ſad conſolation of the guilty; in a word, it is the only refuge of thoſe who can find none in virtue, and in innocence.

But let us now quit all theſe reaſonings, and come to the eſſential point. You are commanded to love thoſe who

deſpitefully

deſpitefully uſe and calumniate you; to pray for them, to entreat their converſion of God, that he change their rancorous heart, that he inſpire them with ſentiments of peace and of charity, and that he place them among the number of his holy. You are commanded to conſider them as already citizens of the heavenly Jeruſalem, with whom you ſhall form only one voice in ſinging the immortal praiſes of grace. You are commanded to look upon injuries as bleſſings, as the puniſhment of your hidden crimes, for which you have ſo often merited to be covered with confuſion before men; as the price of the kingdom of God, which is promiſed to thoſe alone, who with piety bear with perſecution and calumny.

For, after all, it muſt come to this. Self-love alone would make us to love thoſe who love us, who praiſe us, who publiſh our virtues, falſe or true; ſuch was the whole virtue of the Pagans; for, ſaid Jeſus Chriſt, if ye love thoſe that love you, what reward have ye; do not even the publicans ſo? But religion goes farther: it requires us to love thoſe who hate and perſecute us: it fixes at that price the mercies of God upon us, and declares to us, that no forgiveneſs is to be expected for ourſelves, if we grant it not to our brethren.

And candidly, would you have God to forget the crimes and the horrors of your whole life, to be inſenſible to his own glory, which you have ſo often inſulted, while you cannot prevail upon yourſelf to forget a word; while you are ſo warm, ſo delicate, and ſo paſſionate upon the intereſts of your glory; you who perhaps enjoy a reputation which you have never merited; you, who, were you to be known ſuch as you are, would be covered with eternal ſhame and coufuſion; you, in a word, of whom the moſt injurious

injurious diſcourſes only imperfectly repreſent the ſecret wretchedneſs, and of which God alone knoweth the extent? Great God! how little ſhall ſinners have to ſay for themſelves, when thou wilt pronounce againſt them the ſentence of their eternal condemnation!

You will probably tell us, that you perfectly agree to the duties which religion hereupon impoſes, but that the laws of honour have prevailed over thoſe of religion; that, if diſcourſes and proceedings of a certain deſcription be tranquilly ſubmitted to, laſting diſhonour and infamy, in the eyes of men, muſt neceſſarily follow; that to forgive through motives of religion, is nevertheleſs a ſtain of cowardice, which the world never pardons, and that on this point, honour acknowledges neither their exception nor privilege.

What is this honour, my brethren, which is to be bought only at the price of our ſouls, and of our eternal ſalvation? And how worthy of pity, if guilt alone can ſave from ignominy! I know that it is here that the falſe laws of the world ſeem to prevail over thoſe of religion; and that the wiſeſt themſelves, who execrate this abuſe, are however of opinion that it muſt be ſubmitted to. But I ſpeak before a Prince, who, wiſer than the world, and filled with a juſt indignation againſt a madneſs ſo contrary to the maxims of the goſpel, as well as to the intereſts of the ſtate, hath ſhewn to his ſubjects what is the true honour, and who, in forcing criminal arms from their hands, hath marked with laſting infamy thoſe barbarous modes of revenge, to which the public error had detached a deplorable glory.

What, my brethren, an abominable maxim, which the barbarity of the firſt manners of our anceſtors alone hath conſecrated, and handed down to us, ſhould prevail [illegible]

all the rules of Chriſtianity, and all the moſt inviolable rules of the ſtate! It ſhould be no diſhonour to bathe your hands in your brother's blood, while it would be one to obey God, and the prince, who holds his place in the world! Glory would no longer then be but a madneſs, and cowardice but a noble reſpect for religion, and for our maſter. You dread paſſing for a coward! Shew your valour then by ſhedding your blood in the defence of your country; go and brave dangers at the head of our armies, and there ſeek glory in the diſcharge of your duty; eſtabliſh your reputation by actions worthy of being ranked among the memorable events of a reign ſo glorious; ſuch is that valour, which the ſtate requires, and which religion authoriſes. Then deſpiſe theſe brutal and perſonal vengeances; look upon them as a childiſh oſtentation of valour, which is often uſed as a cover to actual cowardice; as the vile and vulgar refuge of thoſe who have nothing ſignal to eſtabliſh their character; as a forced and an equivocal proof of courage, which the world wreſts from us, and againſt which the heart often revolts. Far from imputing ſhame to you, the world itſelf will make it a freſh title of honour to you; you will be ſtill more exalted in its opinion; and you will teach your equals, that miſplaced valour is nothing but a brutal fear; that wiſdom and moderation ever attend true glory; that whatever diſhonours humanity can never do honour to men; and that the goſpel, which inculcates and commands forgiveneſs, hath made more heroes than the world itſelf, which preaches up revenge.

You will perhaps ſay that theſe maxims do not regard you, that you have forgotten all the ſubjects of complaint which you had againſt your brother, and that a reconciliation hath put an end to the eclat of your miſunderſtandings and of your quarrel. Now, I ſay, that it is more eſpecially,

ally on this point that you are grossly deceived; and, after having shewn to you the injustice of our hatreds, it is my duty now to prove to you the falsity of our reconciliations.

PART II. There is not a precept in the law which leaves less room for doubt or for mistake, than that which obliges us to love our brethren; and, nevertheless, there is none upon which more illusions and false maxims are founded. In effect, there is not almost a person who doth not say, that he hath heartily forgiven his brother, and that his conscience is perfectly tranquil on that head; and, nevertheless, nothing is more rare than sincere forgiveness, and there is a few instances of a reconcilement which changes the heart, and which is not merely a false appearance of renewed amity; whether it be considered in its principle, or whether the proceedings and consequences of it be examined.

I say, in its principle; for, my brethren, in order that a reconciliation be sincere and real, it is necessary that it take its source in charity, and in a Christian love of our brother. Now, human motives engross, in general, a work which can be the work of grace alone. A reconciliation takes place, in order not to persist against the pressing entreaties of friends; in order to avoid a certain disagreeable eclat, which would necessarily follow an open hostility, and which might revert upon ourselves, in order not to exclude ourselves from certain societies, from which we would be under the necessity of banishing ourselves were we obstinately to persist in being irreconcileable to our brother. A reconciliation takes place through deference to the great, who exact of us that compliance, in order to acquire a reputation for moderation and greatness of soul; in order to avoid giving transactions to the public

public which would not correſpond with that idea which we would wiſh it to have of us; in order, at once, to cut ſhort the continual complaints and the inſulting diſcourſes of an enemy, who knows us perhaps only too well, and who has once been too deep in our confidence, not to merit ſome caution and deference on our part, and that by a reconciliation, we ſhould endeavour to ſilence him. What more ſhall I ſay? We are reconciled perhaps like Saul, in order more ſecurely to ruin our enemy, and to lull his vigilance and precautions.

Such are, in general, the motives of thoſe reconciliations which every day take place in the world. And what I ſay here is ſo true, that ſinners who ſhew no ſign of piety on any other occaſion, are however reconciled to their brethren in daily inſtances; and they who cannot prevail over themſelves in the eaſieſt duties of the Chriſtian life, appear as heroes in the accompliſhment of this one, which, of all others, is the moſt difficult. Ah! it is becauſe they are heroes of vanity and not of charity: it is, that they leave that part of the reconciliation which alone is heroical and arduous in the ſight of God, viz. an oblivion upon the paſt injury, and a total revolution of our heart towards our brother; and they retain of it only that part which is glorious in the ſight of men, viz. an appearance of moderation, and a promptitude towards amity, which the world itſelf praiſes and admires.

But, if the greateſt part of reconciliations turn out to be falſe when their motives are examined, they are not leſs ſo, if we conſider them in their proceedings. Yes, my brethren, what meaſures and negociations! What formalities and ſolicitudes in concluding them! What attentions, to beſtow, and cautions to obſerve! What intereſt to conciliate,

ciliate, obſtacles to remove, and ſteps to accompliſh! Thus your reconciliation is not the work of charity, but of the wiſdom and ſkill of your friends; it is a worldly affair; it is not a religious ſtep; it is a treaty happily concluded; it is not a duty of faith fulfilled; it is the work of man, but it is not the deed of God: in a word, it is a peace which comes from the earth, it is not the peace of Heaven.

For, candidly, have men been able, through their arrangements and the ingenuity of their meaſures in reconciling you with your brother, to revive that charity which was extinguiſhed in your heart? Have they been able to reſtore that treaſure to you which you had loſt? They have ſucceeded, indeed, in terminating the ſcandal of declared enmity, and in eſtabliſhing between you and your brother the outward duties of ſociety; but they have not changed your heart, which God alone can do; they have not extinguiſhed that hatred, which grace alone can extinguiſh. You are therefore reconciled, but you ſtill love not your brother; and, in effect, if you ſincerely loved him, would ſo many mediators have been required to reconcile you? Love is its own mediator and interpreter. Charity is that brief word, which would have ſaved to your friends all thoſe endleſs toils which they have been obliged to employ in order to reclaim you; it is not ſo meaſured; it frankly confeſſes what it ſincerely feels. Now, before giving way, you have inſiſted upon a thouſand conditions; you have diſputed every ſtep; you have been reſolute in not going beyond a certain point; you have exacted that your brother ſhould make the firſt advances towards meeting you. Charity knows nothing of all theſe rules; it hath only one, and that is, oblivion upon the injury and to love our brother as ourſelf.

I grant that certain prudential meaſures are to be obſerved, and that too haſty or ill-timed advantages might often be not only unſucceſsful, but even the means of hardening your brother ſtill more againſt you. But I ſay that charity ought to regulate theſe meaſures, and not vanity: I ſay, and I repeat it, that all theſe reconciliations which are with ſuch difficulty concluded, where both parties are reſolute in yielding only to a certain point, and even that with precautions ſo ſtrict and ſo preciſe; where ſo many expedients and ſo much myſtery are neceſſary, are the fruits of fleſhly prudence; they correct the manners, but they affect not the heart; they bring the perſons, but not the affections nearer; they re-eſtabliſh civilities, but leave the ſame ſentiments; in a word, they terminate the ſcandal of hatred, but not the ſin. Thus Jeſus Chriſt plainly commands us to go our way and be reconciled to our brother. He ſays not to us, do not go too far, leſt your brother take advantage of it; be firſt convinced that he will meet you halfway; ſeek not after him, leſt he conſider your proceeding as an apology for his complaints, as a tacit acknowledgment of your blame, and a ſentence pronounced againſt yourſelf. Jeſus Chriſt plainly tells us: Go thy way and be reconciled to thy brother. He deſires that the reconciliation take place through charity alone; he ſuppoſes, that in order to love our brother, we have no occaſion for mediators, and that our heart ſhould be fully capable of every thing required without any foreign interference.

Such are the ſteps of reconciliations; thence, the motives being almoſt always human, the proceedings faulty, their conſequences can be only vain and of no effect. I ſay the conſequences; for, my brethren, in what do the far greater part of thoſe reconciliations which every day take

take place in the world, terminate? What is the fruit of them? What is it, which is commonly called a reconciliation with our enemy? I ſhall explain it to you.

You ſay, in the firſt place, that you are reconciled to your brother, and that you have heartily forgiven him; but, that you have taken your reſolution to ſee him no more, and from henceforth to have no father intercourſe with him: And upon this footing, you live tranquil; you believe that nothing more is preſcribed by the goſpel, and that a confeſſor hath no title to demand more. Now I declare that you have not forgiven your brother, and that you are ſtill, with reſpect to him, in hatred, in death, and in ſin.

For I demand of you: do we dread the ſight of thoſe we love? And, if your enemy be now your brother, what can there be ſo hateful and ſo diſagreeable to you in his preſence? You ſay that you have forgiven, and that you love him; but, in order to avoid all accidents, and that his preſence may not arouſe vexatious ideas, you find it more proper to exclude yourſelf from it. But what is that kind of love which the ſole preſence of the beloved object, irritates againſt it, and inflames with hatred and wrath? You love him! That is to ſay, that perhaps you would not wiſh to injure, or to deſtroy him. But that is not enough: religion commands you likewiſe to love him: for honour, indolence, moderation, fear, and want of opportunity, are ſufficient inducements to prevent you from injuring him; but you muſt be Chriſtian to love him; and that is preciſely what you are not willing to be.

And, candidly, would you that God loved you, upon the condition that he ſhould never ſee you? Would you be

be ſatisfied with his goodneſs, and with his mercy, were he forever to baniſh you from his preſence? For you well know that he will treat you, as you ſhall have treated your brother. Would you think yourſelf much in favour with the prince, were he to forbid you ever to preſent yourſelf before him? You conſtantly ſay, that a man is in diſgrace, when he is no longer permitted to appear before the maſter; and you pretend to perſuade us that you love your brother, and that no rancour remains in your heart againſt him, while his ſole preſence diſpleaſes and irritates you.

And what leſs equivocal mark can be given, of animoſity againſt your brother, than that of being unable to endure his preſence? It is the very extreme of hatred and of rancour. For many ſettled hatreds exiſt, which yet are kept under a kind of check; are, as far as poſſible, concealed, and even borrow the outward ſemblance of friendſhip and of decency; and though unable to reconcile the heart to duty, yet have ſufficient command over themſelves, to preſerve appearances to the world. But your hatred is beyond all reſtraint; it knows neither prudence, caution, nor decency; and you pretend to perſuade us that it is now no more! You ſtill ſhew the moſt violent proofs of animoſity, and even theſe you would have us to conſider as the indubitable ſigns of a Chriſtian and ſincere love.

But, beſides, are Chriſtians made to live eſtranged, and unconnected with each other? Chriſtians! The members of one body, the children of the ſame Father, the diſciples of the ſame Maſter, the inheritors of the ſame kingdom, the ſtones of the ſame building, the particles of the ſame maſs! Chriſtians! The participation of one ſame ſpirit, of one ſame redemption, of one ſame righteouſneſs!

neſs! Chriſtians! Sprung from one boſom, regenerated in the ſame water, incorporated in the ſame church, redeemed by one ranſom, are they made to fly each other, to make a puniſhment of ſeeing each other, and to be unable to endure each other? All religion binds, unites us together; the ſacraments in which we join, the public prayers and thankſgivings which we ſing, the ceremonies of that worſhip in which we pride ourſelves, the aſſembly of believers at which we aſſiſt; all theſe externals are only ſymbols of that union which ties us together. All religion itſelf, is but one holy ſociety, a divine communication of prayers, of ſacrifices, of works and of well-doings. Every thing connects and unites us, every thing tends to make of our brethren and of us, only one family, one body, one heart, and one ſoul; and you believe that you love your brother, and that you preſerve, with reſpect to him, all the moſt ſacred ties of religion, while you break through even thoſe of ſociety, and that you cannot endure even his preſence?

I ſay much more: How ſhall you indulge the ſame hope with him? For, by that common hope, you are eternally to live with him, to make his happineſs your own, to be happy with him, to be reunited with him in the boſom of God, and with him to ſing the eternal praiſes of grace. Ah! How could the hope of being for ever united with him be the ſweeteſt conſolation of your life, if it appear ſo deſirable to live in ſeparation from him, and if you find even his preſence a puniſhment? Renounce then the promiſes and all the hopes of faith; ſeparate yourſelf as an accurſed from the communion of believers; interdict to yourſelf the altar and the awful myſteries; baniſh yourſelf from the aſſembly of the holy; no longer come there to offer up your gifts and your prayers, ſince all theſe religi-

ous

ous duties, ſuppoſing you in union with your brother, become deriſions, if you be not ſo, depoſe againſt you in the face of the altars, and proclaim to you to quit the holy aſſembly as a publican and a ſinner.

Perhaps alarmed at theſe holy truths, you will finally tell us, that you will ſo far conquer yourſelf as to ſee your brother, and to live on good terms with him; that you will not be wanting in civilities; but that, for the reſt, you know where to ſtop, and that he need not reckon much upon your friendſhip.

You will not be wanting in civilities! And that, my dear hearer, you believe is to pardon and to be reconciled to your brother, and to love him as yourſelf? But that charity which the goſpel commands is in the heart; it is not a ſimple decorum, a vain outſide, an uſeleſs ceremony; it is real feeling, and an active love; it is a ſincere tenderneſs, ever ready to manifeſt itſelf in actions. You love as a Jew and as a Phariſee, but you love not as a Chriſtian and as a diſciple of Jeſus Chriſt. The law of charity is the law of the heart; it regulates the feelings, changes the inclinations, and pours the oil of peace and of lenity over the wounds of an angry and wounded will; and you turn it into a law wholly external, a phariſaical and ſuperficial law, which regulates only the outſide, which ſettles only the manners, and is fulfilled by vain appearances.

But you are not commanded that you ſhall merely refrain from wounding the rules of courteſy, and that you ſhall pay to your brother all thoſe duties which ſociety mutually impoſes; it is the world which preſcribes this law; theſe are its rules and cuſtoms. But Jeſus Chriſt commands

commands you to love him; and, while your heart is eſtranged from him, it is of little importance that you keep up the vain externals of courteſy. You refuſe to religion the eſſential part; and the only difference betwixt you and thoſe ſinners who perſiſt in not ſeeing their brethren is, that you know how to conſtrain yourſelf for the world, and you know not how to thwart yourſelf for ſalvation.

And ſurely, my brethren, if men were united together by the ſole ties of ſociety, they no doubt would diſcharge their duty, by keeping up all the externals of politeneſs, and by maintaining that mutual commerce of cares, attentions, and courteſies, which conſtitute, as it were, the whole harmony of the body politic. But we are united to gether by the ſacred and cloſe ties of faith, of hope, of charity, and of religion. In the midſt of the world we form a ſociety wholly internal and holy, of which charity is the inviſible bond, and altogether diſtinct from that civil ſociety which legiſlators have eſtabliſhed. Conſequently, by fulfilling with regard to your brethren the external courteſies, you ſatisfy the claims which civil ſociety hath upon you, but you do not fulfil thoſe of religion; you diſturb not the political order, but you overturn the order of charity; you are a peaceable citizen, but you are not a citizen of heaven; you are a man of the age, but you are not a man of the ageto come; the world may acquit you, and demand no more, but what you do is a blank in the ſight of God, becauſe you are not in charity; and your condemnation is certain. Come and tell us after this, that you will not be wanting in decorum, and that religion exacts no more of us. It exacts then only diſſimulations, outſides, and vain appearances? It exacts then nothing true, nothing real, nothing which changes the heart? And the great precept of charity, which alone gives reality to all our works,

would

would no longer then be but a falſe pretence and a vain hypocriſy?

And truſt not ſolely to us on this point; conſult the public itſelf. See if, in ſpite of all the appearances which you ſtill keep up with your brother, it be not an eſtabliſhed opinion in the world that you love him not: and if the world do not act in conſequence of that perſuaſion. See if your creatures, if all who approach and who are attached to you, do not affect to keep at a diſtance from your brother. See if all thoſe who hate him, or who are in intereſts oppoſite to his, do not court your friendſhip and form cloſer ties with you, and if all thoſe who are inimical to your brother do not profeſs themſelves your friends. See if thoſe who have favours to expect from you do not begin by forſaking him, and if they do not think that in ſo doing they are paying court to you. You ſee that the world knows you better than you know yourſelf; that it is not miſtaken in your real ſentiments; and that, in ſpite of theſe vain ſhews towards your brother, you are actually in hatred and in death, and that in this reſpect the world itſelf is of our opinion; that world, which, on every other occaſion, we have conſtantly to combat.

Behold in what terminate the greateſt part of the reconciliations which are every day made in the world. They once more ſee each other, but they are not reunited; they promiſe a mutual friendſhip, but it is never given; their perſons meet, but their hearts are always eſtranged; and I had reaſon to ſay, that the hatreds are unchangeable, and that almoſt all the reconciliations are mere pretences; that the injury may be forgiven, but that the offender is never loved; that they may ceaſe to treat their brother as an enemy, but that they never regard him as a brother.

And,

And, behold what takes place every day before our eyes. In the world are to be ſeen public characters, families of illuſtrious names, who ſtill preſerve with each other certain meaſures of decency, which they cannot indeed break through without ſcandal, yet, nevertheleſs, live in different intereſts, in public and avowed ſentiments of envy, of jealouſy, and of mutual animoſity; thwart and do every thing in their power to ruin each other, view each other with the moſt jealous eyes, and make all their creatures partiſans in their reſentments and averſions; divide the world, the court, and the city; intereſt the public in their quarrel, and eſtabliſh in the world the opinion and the ſcandal that they hate each other; that they would mutually deſtroy each other; that they ſtill, it is true keep up appearances; but that, at bottom, their intereſts and affections are ever eſtranged. Yet, notwithſtanding all this, each party lives in a reputation of piety, and of the practice of good works; they have diſtinguiſhed and highly eſteemed confeſſors; in mutually diſcharging to each other certain duties, yet living otherwiſe in a public and avowed hoſtility, they frequent the ſacraments, they are continually in the intercourſe of holy things, they coolly approach the altar, they frequently and without ſcruple preſent themſelves at the penitential tribunal, where, far from confeſſing their hatred before the Lord, and weeping over the ſcandal with which it afflicts the people, they make freſh complaints againſt their enemy; they accuſe him, in place of accuſing themſelves; they make a boaſt of the vain external duties which they pay to him, and alledge them as marks of the heart not being rancorous: What ſhall I ſay? And the very miniſters of penitence, who ſhould have been the judges of our hatred, frequently become its apologiſts, adopt a party with the public, enter into all the animoſity and prejudices of their penitents, proclaim the juſ-

tice of their quarrel, and are the cauſe that the only remedy deſtined to ſtrike at the root of the evil, anſwers no other purpoſe than that of decorating it with the appearances of godlineſs, and of rendering it more incurable.

Great God! Thou alone canſt cloſe the wounds which a proud ſenſibility hath made in my heart, by nouriſhing unreaſonable and iniquitous hatreds which have corrupted it in thy ſight. Enable me to forget fleeting and momentary injuries, in order that thou may forget the crimes of my whole life. Is it for me, O my God! to be ſo feeling and ſo inexorable to the ſlighteſt inſults, I who have ſuch neceſſity for thy mercy and indulgence? Are the injuries of which I complain to be compared with thoſe with which I have a thouſand times diſhonoured thy ſupreme grandeur? Muſt the worm of the earth be irritated and inflamed at the ſmalleſt marks of diſdain, while thy ſovereign majeſty hath ſo long, and with ſo much goodneſs, endured his rebellions and his offences?

Who am I, to be ſo keen upon the intereſts of my glory; I who dare not in thy preſence caſt mine eyes upon my ſecret ignominy; I who would deſerve to be the reproach of men, and the outcaſt of my people; I who have nothing praiſe-worthy, according even to the world, but the good fortune of having concealed from it my infamies and my weakneſſes; I to whom the moſt biting reproaches would ſtill be too gentle, and would treat me with too much indulgence; I, in a word, who have no ſalvation now to hope, if thou forget not thine own glory, which I have ſo often inſulted?

But no, great God! thy glory is in pardoning the ſinner, and mine ſhall be in forgiving my brother. Accept, O Lord,

Lord, this ſacrifice which I make to thee of my reſentments. Eſtimate not its value by the puerility and the ſlightneſs of the injuries which I forget, but by that pride which had magnified them, and had rendered me ſo feeling to them. And, ſeeing thou haſt promiſed to forgive us our treſpaſſes whenever we ſhall have forgiven the treſpaſſes of our brethren, fulfil, O Lord, thy promiſes. It is in this hope that I preſume to reckon upon thine eternal mercies.

SERMON

SERMON XV.

THE WOMAN WHO WAS A SINNER.

LUKE vii. 37.

And behold a woman in the city, which was a ſinner, when ſhe knew that Jeſus ſat at meat in the Phariſee's houſe, brought an alabaſter-box of ointment, and ſtood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to waſh his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kiſſed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

FROM ſuch abundant tears, ſo ſincere a confuſion, and a proceeding ſo humiliating and uncommon, it may eaſily be comprehended how great muſt once have been the influence of the paſſions over the heart of this ſinner, and what grace now operateth within her. Paleſtine had long beheld her as the ſhame and the reproach of the city; the Phariſee's houſehold views her to-day as the glory of grace, and a model of penitence: What a change, and what a ſpectacle!

This ſoul, fettered, but a moment ago, with the moſt ſhameful and the moſt indiſſoluble chains, finds nothing now capable of ſtopping her; and, without heſitation, ſhe flies to ſeek, at the feet of Jeſus Chriſt, her ſalvation and deliverance: this ſoul hitherto plunged in the ſenſes, and living

living totally for voluptuouſneſs, in a moment ſacrifices their livelieſt charms, and their deareſt ties; this ſoul, laſtly, impatient till then of every yoke, and whoſe heart had never acknowledged other rule than the caprice of its inclinations, commences her penitence by the moſt humiliating proceedings, and the moſt melancholy ſubjections. How admirable, O my God! are the works of thy grace! And how near to its cure is the moſt hopeleſs wretchedneſs, when once it becomes the object of thine infinite mercies! and how rapid and ſhortened are the ways by which thou conducteſt thy choſen!

But whence comes it, my brethren, that ſuch grand examples make ſo trifling an impreſſion upon us? From two prejudices, apparently the moſt oppoſite to each other, yet, nevertheleſs, which proceed from the ſame principle, and lead to the ſame error.

The firſt is, that we figure to ourſelves that converſion of the heart required by God as merely a ceſſation of guilt, the abſtaining from certain exceſſive irregularities, which even decency itſelf holds out as improper. And as we are at laſt brought to that, either by age, new ſituations, or even our own inclinations which time alone has changed, we never think of going farther; we believe that all is completed, and we liſten to the hiſtory of the moſt affecting converſions, held out to us by the church, as to leſſons, which no longer, in any degree, regard us.

The ſecond goes to another extreme: we repreſent Chriſtian penitence to ourſelves, as a horrible ſituation, and the deſpair of human weakneſs; a ſtate without comfort or conſolation, and attended by a thouſand duties, every one more diſguſting than another to the heart; and repulſed, through

through the error of that gloomy image, the example of a change find us little diſpoſed to be affected, becauſe they always find us diſcouraged.

Now, the converſion of our ſinner confutes theſe two prejudices ſo dangerous for ſalvation. *1ſtly*, Her penitence not only terminates her errors, it likewiſe expiates and makes reparation for them. *2dly*, Her penitence begins, it is true, her tears and her ſorrow; but it is likewiſe the commencement to her of new pleaſures. Whatever ſhe had deſpoiled Jeſus Chriſt of in her errors, ſhe reſtores to him in her penitence: behold their reparation! but with Jeſus Chriſt ſhe finds, in her penitence, that peace and thoſe comforts which ſhe had never experienced in her errors: behold their conſolations! The reparations, and the conſolations of her penitence, are the whole hiſtory of her converſion, and the ſubject of this diſcourſe.

PART I. The office of penitence, ſays St. Auguſtin, is that of eſtabliſhing order wherever ſin hath introduced corruption. It is falſe, if it be not univerſal; for order ſolely reſults from a perfect ſubordination of all deſires and emotions which ſpring up in our hearts; every thing muſt be in its place, in order that that divine harmony, which ſin had diſturbed, may be reſtored; and, while the ſmalleſt particular there remains deranged, in vain do you labour to repair the reſt; you only rear up an edifice, which, being improperly arranged, is continually giving way in ſome of its parts, and confuſion and diſorder prevail through the whole.

Now, behold the important inſtruction held out to us in the converſion of this ſinner! Her ſin compriſed ſeveral diſorders: *1ſtly*, An iniquitous uſe of her heart, which had

had never been taken up but with creatures: 2*dly*, A criminal abuſe of all natural gifts, which ſhe had made the inſtruments of her paſſions: 3*dly*, A ſhameful abaſement of her ſenſes, which ſhe had always made to contribute to her voluptuouſneſs and ignominy: *Laſtly*, An univerſal ſcandal in the notoriety of her errors. Her penitence makes reparation for all theſe diſorders: all, conſequently are forgiven; for nothing is neglected in the repentance.

I ſay, 1*ſtly*, An iniquitous uſe of her heart. Yes, my brethren, every love, which has for its object only the creature, degrades our heart: it is a diſorder, to love for itſelf that which can neither be our happineſs nor our perfection, nor, conſequently our eaſe. For, to love, is to ſeek our felicity in that which we love; it is the hope of finding in the object beloved, whatever is wanting to our heart; it is the calling it in aid againſt that ſhocking void which we feel within ourſelves, in the confidence that they ſhall be able to fill it: to love, is to look upon the object beloved as our reſource againſt all our wants, the cure of all our evils, and the author of all our good. Now, as it is in God alone that we can find all theſe advantages, it is a diſorder, and a debaſement of the heart, to ſeek for them in a vile creature.

And, at bottom, we feel ſenſibly ourſelves the injuſtice of that love: however paſſionate it be, we quickly diſcover in the creatures which inſpire it, weakneſſeſs and defects which render them unworthy of it: we ſoon find them out to be unjuſt, fanciful, falſe, vain, and inconſtant: the deeper we examine them, the more we ſay to ourſelves, that our heart has been deceived, and that this is not the object which it ſought. Our reaſon inwardly bluſhes at the weakneſs of our paſſion; we no longer ſubmit to our chains,

chains, but with pain; our paſſion becomes our burden and our puniſhment. But puniſhed, without being undeceived in our error, we ſee, in a change, a remedy for our miſtake: we wander from object to object, and if ſome one at laſt chance to fix us, it is not that we are ſatisfied with our choice, it is that we are tired of our inconſtancy.

Our ſinner had wandered in theſe ways: iniquitous loves had been the cauſe of all her misfortunes, and of all her crimes; and, born to love God alone, he alone it was whom ſhe had never loved. But ſcarcely hath ſhe known him, ſays the goſpel, when, bluſhing at the meanneſs of her former paſſions, ſhe no longer acknowledges, but him alone, to be worthy of her heart: all in the creature appears to her empty, falſe and diſguſting: far from finding thoſe charms, from which her heart had formerly with ſuch difficulty defended itſelf, ſhe no longer ſees in them, but their frivolity, their danger, and their vanity. The Lord alone, in her ſight, appears good, real, faithful, conſtant to his promiſes, magnificent in his gifts, true in his affection, indulgent even in his anger, alone ſufficiently great to fill the whole immenſity of our heart; alone ſufficiently powerful to ſatisfy all its deſires; alone ſufficiently generous to ſoften all its diſtreſſes; alone immortal, and who ſhall for ever be loved: laſtly, to love whom, can be followed by the ſole repentance of having loved him too late.

It is love therefore, my brethren, which makes true penitents: For penitence is only a changing of the heart; and the heart does not change, but in changing its love: penitence is only the re-eſtabliſhment of order in man; and man is only in order when he loves the Lord, for whom

whom he is made: penitence is only a reconciliation with God; and your reconciliation is fictitious, if you do not reſtore to him your heart: in a word, penitence obtains the remiſſion of ſins, and ſins are remitted only in proportion to our love.

Tell us no more then, my brethren, when we hold out theſe grand examples for your imitation, that you do not feel yourſelves born for devotion, and that your heart is of ſuch a nature, that every thing which is denominated piety is diſagreeable to it. What! My dear hearer, your heart is not made for loving its God? Your heart is not made for the Creator who hath given it to you? What! You are born then for vanity and falſehood? Your heart, ſo grand ſo exalted, and which nothing here below can ſatisfy, has been beſtowed on you, ſolely for pleaſures which weary you; creatures which deceive you; honours which embarraſs you; a world which tires, or diſguſts you? God alone, for whom you are made, and who hath made you what you are, ſhould find nothing for himſelf in the principle of your being? Ah! You are unjuſt towards your own heart: You know not yourſelf, and you take your corruption for yourſelf. And in effect, if not born for virtue, what then is the melancholy myſtery of your lot? For what are you born? What chimera then are you among men? You are born then only for remorſe, and gloomy care? the author of your being, hath drawn you from non-entity, only to render you miſerable? You are gifted then with a heart only to purſue an happineſs, which either is viſionary, or which flies from you, and to be a continual burden to yourſelf?

O man! open here thine eyes; fathom to the bottom the deſtiny of thy heart, and thou wilt acknowledge that

theſe turbulent paſſions, which fill thee with ſuch repugnances to virtue, are foreign to thy nature; that ſuch is not the natural ſtate of thy heart; that the author of nature and of grace had beſtowed on thee a more ſublime lot; that thou wert born for order, for righteouſneſs, and for innocence; that thou haſt corrupted an happy nature, by turning it towards iniquitous paſſions; and that if not born for virtue, we know not what thou art, and thou becomeſt incomprehenſible to thyſelf.

But you are miſtaken, when you conſider as inclinations incompatible with piety, thoſe warm propenſities towards pleaſure which are born with you. From the inſtant that grace ſhall have ſanctified them, they will become diſpoſitions favourable for ſalvation. The more you are animated in the purſuit of the world and its falſe pleaſures, the more eager ſhall you be for the Lord, and for true riches; the more you have been found tender and feeling by creatures, the eaſier ſhall be the acceſs of grace to your heart: in proportion as your nature is haughty, proud, and aſpiring, the more ſhall you ſerve the Lord, without fear, without diſguiſe, without meanneſs: the more your character, now appears eaſy, light, and inconſtant, the eaſier it will be for you to detach yourſelf from your criminal attachments, and to return to your God. Laſtly, your paſſions themſelves, if I may venture to ſpeak in this manner, will become the means of facilitating your penitence. Whatever had been the occaſion of your deſtruction, you will render it conducive towards your ſalvation; you will ſee and acknowledge, that to have received a tender, faithful, and generous heart, is to have been born for piety, and that a heart which creatures have been able to touch, holds out great and favourable diſpoſitions towards grace.

Peruſe

Peruſe what remains to us of the hiſtory of the juſt, and you will ſee that thoſe who have at the firſt been dragged away by mad paſſions, who were born with every talent calculated for the world, with the warmeſt propenſities towards pleaſures, and the moſt oppoſite to every thing pious, have been thoſe in whom grace hath operated the moſt wonderful change. And, without mentioning the ſinner of our goſpel, the Auguſtins, the Pelagius', the Fabioles', thoſe worldly and diſſipated ſouls, ſo obſtinate and rooted in their debaucheries, and ſo diametrically oppoſite, it would ſeem, to piety; what progreſs have they not ſince made in the ways of God? And their former propenſities, have, as I may ſay, only paved the way for their penitence. The ſame ſoil which nouriſhes and produces great paſſions, gives birth likewiſe to the greateſt virtues, when it pleaſes the Lord to change the heart. My God! Thou haſt made us all for thee, and in the incomprehenſible arrangement of thy Providence, and of thy mercy towards man, even our weakneſſes are to conduce towards our ſanctification. It is thus, that our ſinner made reparation for the iniquitous uſe of her heart.

But, *ſadly*, The love which ſhe had for Jeſus Chriſt was not one of thoſe vain and indolent ſenſibilities, which are rather the natural emotions of an eaſily affected heart than real impreſſions of grace, and which never produce any thing in us, further than that of rendering us ſatisfied with ourſelves, and perſuading us that our heart is changed: the ſacrifices, and not the feelings, prove the reality of love.

Thus, the ſecond diſorder of her ſin having been the criminal and almoſt univerſal abuſe of all creatures; the ſecond reparation of her penitence, is the rigorouſly abſtaining

ſtaining from all thoſe things which ſhe had abuſed in her errors. Her hair, her perfumes, the gifts of body and of nature, had been the inſtruments of her pleaſures; for none is ignorant of the uſe to which a deplorable paſſion can apply them; this is the firſt ſtep of her penitence: the perfumes are abandoned, and even conſecrated to a holy miniſtry; her hair is neglected, and no longer ſerves but to wipe the feet of her deliverer; beauty, and every attention to the body, are neglected, and her eyes are blinded with tears. Such are the firſt ſacrifices of her love: ſhe is not contented with giving up cares viſibly criminal, ſhe even ſacrifices ſuch as might have been looked upon as innocent, and thinks, that the propereſt way of puniſhing the abuſe ſhe had formerly made of them, is, by depriving herſelf of the liberty ſhe might ſtill have had of employing them.

In effect, by having once abuſed them, the ſinner loſes the right he had over them; what is permitted to an innocent ſoul, is no longer ſo to him who has been ſo unhappy as to deviate from the right path: Sin renders us, as it were, anathematiſed to all creatures around us, and which the Lord had deſtined to our uſe. Thus, there are rules for an unfaithful ſoul, not made for other men: he no longer enjoys, as I may ſay, the common right, and he muſt no more judge of his duties by the general maxims, but by the perſonal exceptions which concern him.

Now, upon this principle, you are continually demanding of us, if the uſe of ſuch and ſuch an artifice in dreſs be a crime? If ſuch and ſuch public pleaſures be forbidden? I mean not here to decide for others; but I aſk at you who maintain their innocency, whether you have never made a bad uſe of them? Have you never made theſe

cares

cares of the body, theſe amuſements, and theſe artifices inſtrumental towards iniquitous paſſions? Have you never employed them in corrupting hearts, or in nouriſhing the corruption of your own? What! Your entire life has perhaps been one continued and deplorable chain of paſſions and evils; you have abuſed every thing around you, and have made them inſtrumental to your irregular appetites; you have called them all in aid, to that unfortunate tendency of your heart; your intentions have even exceeded your evil; your eye hath never been ſingle and you would willingly never have had that of others to have been ſo with regard to you; all your cares for your perſon, have been crimes; and when there is queſtion of returning to your God, and of making reparation for a whole life of corruption and debauchery, you pretend to diſpute with him for vanities, of which you have always made ſo infamous an uſe? You pretend to maintain the innocency of a thouſand abuſes, which, though permitted to the reſt of men, would be forbidden to you? You enter into conteſtation, when it is intended to reſtrict you from the criminal pomps of the world: You to whom the moſt innocent, if ſuch there be, are forbidden in future, and whoſe only dreſs ought henceforth to be ſackcloth and aſhes? Can you ſtill pretend to juſtify cares, which are your inward ſhame, and which have ſo often covered you with confuſion at the feet of the ſacred tribunal? And ſhould ſo much conteſtation and ſo many explanations be required, where your own ſhame alone ſhould amply ſuffice?

Beſides, the holy ſadneſs of piety no longer looks upon, but with horror, that which has once been a ſtumbling-block to us. The contrite ſoul examines not whether he may innocently indulge in it; it ſuffices for him to know, that it has a thouſand times been the rock upon which

which he has ſeen his innocence ſplit. Whatever has been inſtrumental in leading him to his evils, becomes equally odious in his ſight, as the evils themſelves; whatever has been aſſiſting to his paſſions, he equally deteſts as the paſſions themſelves; whatever, in a word, has been favourable to his crimes, becomes criminal in his eyes. Should it even happen that we might be diſpoſed to accord it to his weakneſs, ah! his zeal, his compunction, would reject the indulgence, and would adopt the intereſts of God's righteouſneſs againſt men; he could not prevail upon himſelf to permit abuſes, which would be the means of recalling to him his paſt diſorders; he would always entertain a dread that the ſame manner of acting might recal the ſame diſpoſitions, and that, engroſſed by the ſame cares, his heart would find itſelf the ſame; the ſole image of his paſt infidelities diſturbs and alarms him; and, far from bearing about with him their ſad remains, he would wiſh to have it in his power to remove even from the ſpots, and to tear himſelf from the occupations, which renew their remembrance. And, ſurely, what kind of a penitence muſt that be, which ſtill permits us to love all thoſe things which have been the occaſion of our greateſt crimes? And, while yet dripping from a ſhipwreck, can we too ſtrenuouſly form the reſolution of for ever ſhunning thoſe rocks upon which we had ſo lately ſplit?

Laſtly, true penitence cauſes us to find every where matter of a thouſand inviſible ſacrifices. It does not confine itſelf to certain eſſential privations; every thing which flatters the paſſions, every thing which nouriſhes the life of the ſenſes, every ſuperfluity which tends ſolely to the gratification of ſelf-love, all theſe become the ſubject of its ſacrifices: and, like a ſharp and grievous ſword, it every where makes diviſions and ſeparations painful to the

heart,

heart, and cuts even to the quick, whatever in the ſmalleſt degree approached too near to the corruption of our propenſities. The grace of compunction at once leads the contrite ſoul to this point; it renders him ingenious in puniſhing himſelf, and arranges matters ſo well, that every thing ſerves in expiation of his crimes; that duties, ſocial intercourſe, honours, proſperity, and the cares attendant upon his ſtation, become opportunities of proving his merit; and that even his pleaſures, through the circumſpection and faith with which they are accompanied, become praiſeworthy and virtuous actions.

Behold the divine ſecret of penitence! As it officiates here below towards the criminal ſoul, ſays Tertullian, as the juſtice of God, and as the juſtice of God ſhall one day puniſh guilt by the eternal privation of all creatures which the ſinner hath abuſed, penitence anticipates that terrible judgment; it every where impoſes on itſelf the moſt rigorous privations; and if the miſerable condition of human life render the uſe of preſent things ſtill requiſite, it employs them much leſs to flatter than to puniſh the ſenſes, by the ſober and auſtere manner in which it applies them.

'You have only to calculate thereupon the truth of your penitence. In vain do you appear to have left off the brutal gratification of the paſſions, if the ſame pomp and ſplendour are requiſite towards ſatisfying that natural inclination, which courts diſtinction through a vain magnificence; the ſame profuſions, in conſequence of not having the courage to deprive ſelf-love of accuſtomed ſuperfluities; the ſame pleaſures of the world, in conſequence of being unable to do without it; the ſame advantages on the part of fortune, in conſequence of the continual deſire of riſing ſuperior to others: in a word, if you can part with nothing

nothing, you exclude yourſelf from nothing; even admitting that all thoſe attachments which you ſtill preſerve ſhould not be abſolute crimes, your heart is not penitent; your manners are apparently different, but all your paſſions are ſtill the ſame; you are apparently changed, but you are not converted. How rare, my brethren, are true penitents! How common are vain and ſuperficial converſions! And how many ſouls, changed in the eyes of the world, ſhall one day find themſelves the ſame before God!

But it is not enough to have attained to that degree of ſelf-denial, which keeps us without the circle of attraction; to the allurements of guilt; thoſe laborious atonements muſt likewiſe be added, which waſh out its ſtains. Thus, in the third place, the ſinner of our goſpel is not contented with having ſacrificed her hair and her perfumes to Jeſus Chriſt; ſhe proſtrates herſelf at his feet, ſhe waſhes them with her tears, ſhe wipes, ſhe kiſſes them: and as the third diſorder of her ſin had been a ſhameful ſubjection of her ſenſes, ſhe begins the reparation of theſe criminal lewdneſſes, by the humiliation and diſguſt of theſe lowly ſervices.

New inſtruction: it is not ſufficient to remove from the paſſions thoſe allurements which incite them; it is likewiſe neceſſary that laborious exertions of ſuch virtues as are moſt oppoſite to them, inſenſibly repreſs, and recal them to duty and order. You were fond of gaming, pleaſures, amuſements, and every thing which compoſes a worldly life; it is doing little to cut off from theſe pleaſures that portion which may ſtill conduct to guilt; if you wiſh that the love of the world be extinguiſhed in your heart, it is neceſſary that prayer, retirement, ſilence, and acts of charity, ſucceed to theſe diſſolute manners; and that, not ſatisfied

tisfied with ſhunning the crimes of the world, you likewiſe fly from the world itſelf. By giving yourſelf up to boundleſs and ſhameful paſſions, you have fortified the empire of the ſenſes and of the fleſh; it is neceſſary that faſting, watching, the yoke of mortification, gradually extinguiſh theſe impure fires, weaken theſe tendencies, become ungovernable through a long indulgence of voluptuouſneſs, and not only remove guilt from you, but operate, as I may ſay, to dry up its ſource in your heart. Otherwiſe by ſparing, you only render yourſelf more miſerable: the old attachments which you ſhall have broken without having weakened, and, as it were, rooted them from your heart by mortification, will inceſſantly be renewing their attacks; your paſſions, become more violent and impetuous by being checked and ſuſpended without your having weakened and overcome them, will make you undergo agitations and ſtorms, ſuch as you had never experienced even in guilt: you will behold yourſelf on the point, every moment, of a melancholy ſhipwreck; you will never taſte of peace in this new life. You will find yourſelf more weak, more exhauſted, more animated for pleaſure, more eaſy to be ſhaken, and more diſguſted with the ſervice of God, in this ſtate of imperfect penitence, than you had even been formerly in the midſt of diſſipation: every thing will become a rock to you; you will be a continual temptation to yourſelf; you will be aſtoniſhed to find within you a ſtill greater repugnance to duties; and, as it is hardly poſſible to ſtand out long againſt yourſelf, you will ſoon become diſguſted with a virtue by which you ſuffer ſo much; and, in conſequence of your having wiſhed to be only a tranquil and mitigated penitent, you will be an unhappy one, without conſolation, without peace, and conſequently without perſeverance. To augment and multiply the ſacrifices is to abridge the ſufferings in virtue; and whatever we are in-

duced to ſpare to the paſſions, becomes rather the puniſhment and the diſguſt than the ſoftening of our penitence.

The laſt diſorder which had accompanied the ſin of the woman of our goſpel, was the publicneſs of the ſcandal attending the corruption of her conduct. The ſcandal of the law, which was diſhonoured in the opinion of the Romans and of ſo many other gentiles, ſpread throughout Paleſtine, and who, witneſſing the ill-conduct of our ſinner, took occaſion, no doubt, from it, to blaſpheme the name of the Lord, to deſpiſe the ſanctity of his law, to harden themſelves in their impious ſuperſtitions, and to look upon the hope of Iſrael and the wonders of God, as related in the holy books, as fictions invented to amuſe a credulous people.

Scandal of place: Her ill-conduct had been conſpicuous in the city, that is to ſay, in the capital of the country; from whence the reports of ſuch accidents were ſoon circulated throughout Judea. Now, behold the ſcandals for which her penitence makes reparation: the ſcandal of the law, by renouncing the ſuperſtitious traditions of the Phariſees, who had adulterated their precepts; and by confeſſing Jeſus Chriſt, who was the end and the fulfilment of them. For, too frequently, after having diſhonoured religion in the minds of the impious, through our exceſſes and ſcandalous conduct, we again diſhonour it through our pretended piety; we create for ourſelves a kind of virtue altogether worldly, ſuperficial, and phariſaical; we become ſuperſtitious without becoming penitent; we make the abuſes of devotion ſucceed to thoſe of the world; the only reparation we make for the ſcandal of our debaucheries, is that of a ſenſual piety; and we reflect more diſgrace upon virtue, through the weakneſſes and illuſions

luſions which we mingle with it, than we did by our open and avowed exceſſes. Thus the impious are more hardened in their iniquity, and more removed from converſion, by the example of our falſe penitence, than ever they had formerly been by the example even of our vices.

Laſtly, the ſcandal of place: That ſame city which had been the theatre of her ſhame and of her crimes, becomes that of her penitence. She goes not into retired places to give vent to her ſorrows and her tears; ſhe takes no advantage, like Nicodemus, of the ſhades of night to come to Jeſus Chriſt, nor waits the opportunity of his being in a retired corner of the city, in order to conceal from the eyes of the public the firſt ſteps of her converſion. In the face of that great city which ſhe had ſcandaliſed by her conduct; ſhe enters into the houſe of the phariſee, and is not afraid of ſubmitting to have as ſpectators of her penitence, thoſe who had been witneſſes of her former crimes. For often, after having deſpiſed the world's opinion in debauchery, it becomes dreaded in virtue: the eyes of the public did not appear formidable to us during our diſſipation; they become ſo in our penitence; our vices were careleſsly laid open to view; our virtues are backward and cautious; we dare not at firſt declare openly for Jeſus Chriſt; we are aſhamed to ſhew ourſelves in a light ſo new to us; we have gloried in vice as if it had been a virtue, and we bluſh for being virtuous, as though it were a ſhame.

As our fortunate ſinner had not been timid in evil, ſo is ſhe not timed in good; ſhe bears, even with a holy inſenſibility, the reproaches of the phariſee, who recounts in the preſence of all the gueſts, the infamy of her paſt manners. For the world, typified by that phariſee, feels a gratification in the mean pleaſure of recalling the former errors of

of thoſe whom grace hath touched: far from reaping any edification from their preſent good conduct, it is continually dwelling upon their paſt irregularity; it tries to weaken the merit of what they now do, by renewing upon every occaſion the remembrance of what they have done; it would appear that the errors which they lament authoriſe thoſe which we love, and in which we ſtill continue to live; and that it is more allowable for us to be ſinners, ſince real and ſincere penitents repent of having been ſo. It is thus, O my God! that every thing worketh out our deſtruction, and that, inſtead of bleſſing and praiſing the riches of thy mercy when thou withdraweſt worldly and diſſolute ſouls from the ways of perdition, and inſtead of being excited by theſe grand examples, to have recourſe to thy clemency, always ſo ready to receive the repentant ſinner; inſenſible and blind to his penitence, we are occupied only in recalling his errors, as if we were entitled from thence to ſay to ourſelves, that we have nothing to dread in debauchery; that one day or other we ſhall likewiſe become contrite; and that the ſincereſt penitents, having once been perhaps ſtill more deeply involved than we in mad paſſions, we need not deſpair of one day or other being able to quit them as well as they! O inexplicable blindneſs of man, that finds inducements to debauchery even in the examples of penitence!

Such were the reparations of our ſinner. But if it be an error to repreſent to ourſelves a change of life as the ſimple ceſſation of our former debaucheries, without adding to that thoſe expiations which waſh them out; it is likewiſe another not leſs dangerous, the conſidering theſe expiations as involving you in a ſituation, gloomy, wretched, and hopeleſs. Thus, after having mentioned to you the

the reparations of her penitence, it is proper that I now lay before you the conſolations.

PART II. Come unto me, ſays Jeſus Chriſt, all ye who are weary of the ways of iniquity; take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye ſhall find reſt unto your ſouls; for my yoke is eaſy and my burden is light.

This promiſe, addreſſed to all criminal ſouls, who are always miſerable in debauchery, is completely fulfilled in the inſtance of the ſinner of our goſpel. In effect, every thing which had formerly been to her, in her diſſipations, an inexhauſtible fund of diſguſt, becomes now, in her penitence, a fruitful ſource of conſolation; and with Jeſus Chriſt ſhe is happy, through the ſame means which, during her guilt, had occaſioned all her miſeries.

Yes my brethren, an iniquitous love had been her firſt guilt, and the firſt ſource of all her diſtreſſes; the firſt conſolation of her penitence, is a holy derilection for Jeſus Chriſt, and the wide difference between that divine and new love, and the profane love which had hitherto engroſſed her heart. I ſay the difference in the object, in the proceedings, and in the correſpondence.

In the object: the depravity of her heart, had attached her to men, corrupted, inconſtant, deceitful, rather companions of her debauchery than real friends, leſs watchful to render her happy, than attentive to the gratification of their own inordinate paſſions; to men, who always join contempt, to a gratified paſſion; to Amnons, in whoſe eyes, from the moment that they have obtained their wiſhes, the unfortunate object of their love becomes vile and hateful;

hateful; to men whoſe weakneſſes, artifices, tranſports and defects ſhe well knew, and whom ſhe inwardly acknowledged to be unworthy of her heart, and to whom ſhe paid any attention, more through the unfortunate bias of paſſion, than the free choice of her reaſon; in a word, to men, who had never yet been able to fix the natural inſtability, and love of change, of her heart. Her penitence attaches her to Jeſus Chriſt, the model of all virtue, the ſource of all grace, the principle of all light; the more ſhe ſtudies him, the more does ſhe diſcover his greatneſs and ſanctity; the more ſhe loves him, the more does ſhe find him worthy of being loved: to Jeſus Chriſt, the faithful, immortal, and diſintereſted friend of her ſoul, who is concerned for her eternal intereſts alone; who is intereſted only in what may render her happy; who is even come to ſacrifice his eaſe, his glory and his life, in order to ſecure her immortal happineſs; who has diſtinguiſhed her, from among ſo many women of Judah, by an overflowing of mercy, when ſhe had rendered herſelf the moſt conſpicuous of her ſex, by the exceſs of her wretchedneſs; who expects nothing from her, but is willing to beſtow on her, far more than ſhe could ever have hoped; *laſtly*, to Jeſus Chriſt, who has tranquiliſed her heart, by purifying it; who has fixed its inconſtancy, and ſubdued the multiplicity of its deſires; who has filled the whole extent of her love; who has reſtored to her that internal peace, which creatures had never been able to beſtow.

O my ſoul! How long ſhalt thou continue to love in creatures, what is but thine affliction and puniſhment? Wouldſt thou ſuffer more by breaking aſunder thy chains, than thou now doſt in bearing them? Would virtue and innocence be more painful, than thoſe ſhameful paſſions which at preſent debaſe and rend thee? Ah! Thou ſhalt find

find every thing light and eaſy, in compariſon with the cruel agitations which render thee ſo unhappy in guilt. Difference in the object of her love.

Difference in the ſteps. The exceſs of paſſion had led her to a thouſand ſteps, in oppoſition to her inclination, her glory, and her reaſon; had led her to make a ſacrifice to men of her quiet, her inclinations, her honour, and her liberty; to ſhameful condeſcenſions, and diſagreeable ſubmiſſions; to important ſacrifices, for which the only return was their thinking themſelves more entitled from thence to exact ſtill more: for ſuch is the ingratitude of men; the more you allow them to become maſters of your heart, the more they erect themſelves its tyrant: in their opinion, the exceſs of your attachment to them diminiſhes its merit; and they puniſh you for the fervour and the ſhame of your tranſports, by taking occaſion, even from thence, to ſuffer all, even to their gratitude, to be cooled.

Behold the grateful returns experienced by our ſinner in the ways of the paſſions! But in her penitence every thing is reckoned: the ſlighteſt ſtep which ſhe takes for Jeſus Chriſt is noticed, is praiſed, is defended by Jeſus Chriſt himſelf. The phariſee vainly endeavours to leſſen her merit, (for the world never ſtudies but to diminiſh the value of the virtues of the juſt), the Saviour undertakes her defence: "Seeſt thou this woman?" ſaid he to him, as if he thereby meant to ſay, Knoweſt thou all the merit of the ſacrifices which ſhe makes to me, and how far the ſtrength and the exceſs of her love for me extend? She hath not ceaſed to waſh my feet with tears, and to wipe them with the hairs of her head. He reckons, he obſerves every thing; a ſigh, a tear, a ſimple movement of the heart; nothing is loſt upon him of whatever is done

for

for him; nothing eſcapes the exactneſs of his glances, and the tenderneſs of his heart; we are well aſſured that we ſerve no ungrateful maſter; he overvalues even the ſlighteſt ſacrifices. "Seeſt thou this woman?" He would, it appears, that all men view her with the ſame eyes that he did: that all men ſhould be as equitable eſtimators as himſelf of her love, and of her tears: he no longer ſees her debaucheries; he forgets a whole life of error and guilt; he ſees only her repentance and her tears.

Now, what conſolation for a contrite ſoul, to have it in her power to ſay to herſelf, Till now, I have lived only for error and vanity; my days, my years, my cares, my inquietudes, my diſtreſſes, all are hitherto loſt, and no longer exiſt, even in the memory of thoſe men for whom alone I have lived, for whom alone I have ſacrificed every thing; my rectitude, my attentions, my anxieties, have never been repaid but with ingratitude; but, henceforth, whatever I do for Jeſus Chriſt will receive its full eſtimation; my ſufferings, my afflictions, the ſlighteſt ſacrifices of my heart; my ſighs, my tears, which I had ſo often ſhed in vain for creatures; all ſhall be written in immortal characters in the book of life: all theſe ſhall eternally exiſt in the remembrance of that faithful Maſter whom I ſerve; all theſe, in ſpite of the defects mingled with them by my weakneſs and my corruption, ſhall be excuſed, and even purified through the grace of my Redeemer; and he will crown his gifts by rewarding my feeble deſerts: I no longer live but for eternity; I no longer labour in vain; my days are real, my life is no longer a dream. O my brethren, what a bleſſed gain is piety! And how great are the conſolations which a ſoul recalled to Jeſus Chriſt receives, in compenſation for the trifling loſſes which he ſacrifices to him!

Laſtly

Laſtly, Difference in the certitude of the correſpondence. That love of creatures which actuated our ſinner, had always been attended with the moſt cruel uncertainties. One is always ſuſpicious of an equal return of love: the heart is ingenious in rendering itſelf unhappy, and in tormenting itſelf with vain fears, ſuſpicions, and jealouſies: the more generous, true, and frank it is itſelf, the more doth it ſuffer: it is the martyr of its own diſtruſts. You know this well; and it does not belong to me to pretend to ſpeak from this place the language of your extravagant paſſions.

But what a new deſtiny in the change of her love! Scarcely is her love of Jeſus Chriſt commenced, when ſhe is certain of being beloved: ſhe hears from his divine mouth the favourable ſentence, which, in remitting her ſins, confirms to her the love and the affection of him who remits them: not only are her debaucheries forgotten, but ſhe is urged to be convinced in her own mind, that they are forgotten, pardoned, and waſhed out; all her fears are prevented, and ground is no more left for miſtruſt or uncertainty; nor can ſhe longer ſuſpect the love of Jeſus Chriſt, without at the ſame time ſuſpecting his power, and the faithfulneſs of his promiſes.

Such is the lot of a contrite ſoul on quitting the tribunal where Jeſus Chriſt, through the miniſtry of the prieſt, has remitted debaucheries, which he has waſhed out with his tears and his love. In ſpite of that uncertainty inſeparable from the preſent ſtate of life, whether he be worthy of love or hatred, an internal peace bears teſtimony in the bottom of his heart that he is reſtored to Jeſus Chriſt: he experiences a calm and a joy in his conſcience, which can be the fruit of righteouſneſs alone. Not that he is entirely de-

livered from alarm and apprehenſion on account of his paſt infidelities, and that, in certain moments, more forcibly ſtruck with horror at his paſt errors, and the ſeverity of God's judgments, he is not tempted to conſider all as hopeleſs to him; but Jeſus Chriſt, who himſelf excites theſe ſtorms in his heart, has quickly calmed them; his voice ſtill inwardly ſays to him, as formerly to Peter alarmed upon the waves: "O thou of little faith, wherefore doubteſt thou?" Have I not given thee ſufficient proofs of my kindneſs and my protection? Reflect upon all that I have done in order to withdraw thee from the ways of iniquity: I ſeek not with ſuch perſeverance the ſheep that I love not; I recal them not from ſo far, to let them periſh before my eyes; diſtruſt then no more my affection; dread only thine own lukewarmneſs or inconſtancy. Firſt conſolation of her penitence; the difference of her love.

The ſecond is the ſacrifice of her paſſions. She throws at the feet of Jeſus Chriſt her perfumes, her hair, all the attachments of her heart, all the deplorable inſtruments of her vanities, and of her crimes; and do not ſuppoſe that in acting thus ſhe ſacrifices her pleaſures; ſhe ſacrifices only her anxieties and her puniſhments.

In vain is it ſaid that the cares of the paſſions conſtitute the felicity of thoſe poſſeſſed by them; it is a language in which the world glories, but which experience belies. What puniſhment to a worldly ſoul, anxious to pleaſe, are the ſolicitous cares of a beauty, which fades and decays every day! What attentions and conſtraints! They muſt take upon themſelves, upon their inclinations, upon their pleaſures, upon their indolence: what inward vexations, when theſe cares have been unavailing, and when more fortunate charms have attracted the general attention!

What

What tyranny is that of cuſtom! It muſt, however, be ſubmitted to, in ſpite of deranged affairs, a remonſtrating huſband, tradeſmen who murmur, and who dearly ſell the remiſſions perhaps required. I ſay nothing of the cares of ambition: what a life is that paſſed in deſigns, projects, fears, hopes, alarms, jealouſies, ſubjection, and meanneſſes! I ſpeak not of a profane connection: what terrors leſt the myſtery be laid open! What eyes to ſhun! What ſpies to deceive! What mortifying repulſes to undergo from the very perſon for whom they have perhaps ſacrificed their honour and their liberty, and of whom they dare not even complain! To all theſe, add thoſe cruel moments when paſſion, leſs unruly, allows us leiſure to inſpect ourſelves, and to feel the whole infamy of our ſituation; thoſe moments in which the heart, born for more ſolid joys, wearies of its own idols, and finds ample puniſhment in its diſguſts and in its own inconſtancy. World profane! If ſuch be the felicity thou vaunteſt ſo much, diſtinguiſh thy worſhippers, and, by crowning them with ſuch an happineſs, puniſh them for the faith which they have ſo credulouſly given to thy promiſes.

Behold what our ſinner caſts at the feet of Jeſus Chriſt, her bonds, her troubles, her ſlavery; in appearance, the inſtruments of her pleaſures, in truth the ſource of all her afflictions. Now, granting that this were the only conſolation of virtue, is it not a ſufficiently grand one, that of deliverance from the keeneſt anxieties of the paſſions? To have your happineſs no longer dependant upon the inconſtancy, the perfidy, and the injuſtice of creatures; to have placed yourſelf beyond the reach of events; to poſſeſs in your own heart all that is wanting towards your happineſs, or to ſuffice, as I may ſay, to yourſelf? What do you loſe, in ſacrificing gloomy and anxious cares, in or-

der

der to find peace and inward joy; and to lose all for Jesus Christ, is it not, as the apostle says, to have gained all? Thy faith hath made thee whole, said the Saviour to the woman; go in peace. Behold the treasure which she receives in return for the passions sacrificed to him: behold the reward and the consolation of her tears and of her repentance; that peace of mind which she had never, as yet, been able to find, and which the world hath never bestowed. Fools! says a prophet; misery to you, then, who drag on the load of your passions, as the ox in labouring drags on the chains of the yoke which galls him, and who rush on to your destruction by the way even of anguish, subjection and constraint!

Lastly, By her sin she had been degraded in the eyes of men: they beheld with contempt the shame and the infamy of her conduct; she lived degraded from every right which a good reputation and a life free from reproach bestow; and the pharisee is even astonished that Jesus Christ should condescend to suffer her at his feet.

For the world, which authorises whatever leads to dissipation, never fails to cover dissipation itself with infamy; it approves, it justifies the maxims, the habits, and the pleasures which corrupt the heart; and yet it insists that innocency and regularity of manners be united with corruption of heart; it inspires all the passions, yet it always blames the consequences of them; it requires you to study the art of pleasing, and it despises you from the moment that you have succeeded; its lascivious theatres resound with extravagant praises of profane love, and its conversations consist only of biting satires upon those who yield themselves up to that unfortunate tendency; it praises the graces, the charms, the miserable talents which light

up

up impure deſires, and it loads you with everlaſting ſhame and reproach from the moment that you appear inflamed with them. O how infinitely above deſcription wretched are thoſe who drag on in a ſtill beloved world, and which they find themſelves incapable of doing without, the miſerable wrecks of a reputation, either blaſted or but feebly confirmed; and wherever they ſhew themſelves, to arouſe the remembrance or the ſuſpicion of their crimes!

Such had been the afflictions and the diſgraces, with which the paſſions and the debaucheries of our ſinner were followed; but her penitence reſtores to her more honour and more glory than had been taken from her by the infamy of her crimes. This ſinner, ſo deſpiſed in the world, whoſe name was never mentioned without a bluſh, is praiſed for the very things which even the world conſiders as moſt honourable, viz. kindneſs of heart, generoſity of ſentiments, and the fidelity of an holy love; this ſinner, with whom no compariſon durſt ever be made, and whoſe ſcandal was without example in the city, is exalted above the phariſee; the truth, the ſincerity of her faith, of her compunction, of her love, merits at once the preference over a ſuperficial and pharaſaical virtue: *Laſtly*, This ſinner, whoſe name was concealed, as if unworthy of being pronounced, and whoſe only appellation, is that of her crimes, is become the glory of Jeſus Chriſt, the praiſe of grace, and an honour to the goſpel. O matchleſs power of virtue!

Yes, my brethren, vitue renders us a ſpectacle, worthy of God, of angels, and of men: it once more exalts a fallen reputation; it renews our claim, even here below, to rights and honours which we had forfeited; it waſhes out ſtains, which the malignity of men would wiſh to be immortal:

immortal: it rejoins us to the ſervants of Jeſus Chriſt, and to the ſociety of the juſt, of whoſe intercourſe we were formerly unworthy: it calls forth in us a thouſand laudable qualities, which the vortex of the paſſions had almoſt forever engulphed: *Laſtly*, it attracts more glory to us, than our paſt manners had attached ſhame and contempt. While Jonah is rebellious to the will of God, he is the curſe of Heaven, and of the earth; even idolaters are under the neceſſity of ſeparating him from their ſociety, and of caſting him out, as a child of infamy and malediction; and the belly of a monſter is the only aſylum in which he can conceal his reproach and ſhame. But touched with contrition, ſcarcely hath he implored the eternal mercies of the God of his Fathers, when he becomes the admiration of the proud Ninevah; when the grandees and the people unite to render him honour ſtill then unheard of; when the prince himſelf, full of reſpect for his virtue, deſcends from the throne, and covers himſelf with ſackcloth and aſhes, in obedience to the man of God. Thoſe paſſions which the world praiſes and inſpires, had drawn upon us the contempt even of the world; virtue which the world cenſures, and combats, attracts to us, however unwillingly on its part, its veneration and homages.

What, my dear hearer, prevents you then from terminating your ſhame, and your inquietudes, with your crimes? Is it the reparations of penitence which alarm you? But the longer you delay the more they multiply, the more debts are contracted, the more you increaſe the neceſſity of new rigours to your weakneſs. Ah! if the reparations diſcourage you at preſent, what ſhall it one day be, when your crimes, multiplied to infinity, almoſt no puniſhment whatever ſhall be capable of expiating them? They ſhall then plunge you into deſpair; and you will adopt the miſerable party

party of caſting off all yoke, and of no longer reckoning upon your ſalvation; you will raiſe up to yourſelf new maxims, and modes of reaſoning, in order to tranquilize your mind in freethinking; you will conſider as needleſs a penitence which will then appear to you impoſſible. When the embarraſſments of the conſcience come to a certain point, we feel a kind of gloomy ſatisfaction in perſuading ourſelves, that no reſource is left; we calm ourſelves on the foundation of truths, when we ſee ourſelves ſo far removed from what they preſcribe; we fly to unbelief for a remedy, from the moment that we believe it is no longer to be found in faith; from the moment that the chaos becomes inexplicable to us, we have ſoon ſettled it in our minds, that all is uncertain. And beſides, what ſhould there be ſo melancholy and ſo rigorous in reparations, whoſe holy merit ought to ſpring from love?

Unbelieving ſoul! you dread being unable to ſupport the holy ſadneſs of penitence; yet you have hitherto been able to bear up againſt the internal horrors of guilt: virtue in your eyes ſeems weariſome beyond ſufferance; yet, have you long dragged on under the ſtings of an ulcerated conſcience, which no joy could enliven. Ah! Since you have hitherto been able to bear up againſt all the inward anguiſh, the bitterneſſes, the diſguſts, the gloomy agitations of iniquity, no longer dread thoſe of virtue: in the pains and ſufferances inſeparable from guilt, you have undergone trials far beyond what may be attached to virtue; and doubly ſo, becauſe grace ſoftens, and renders even pleaſing, the ſufferings of piety, while the only ſweetener of guilt is the bitterneſs of guilt itſelf.

My God! Is it poſſible, that, for ſo many years paſt, I have had ſtrength to wander in ſuch arduous and dreary ways,

ways, under the tyranny of the world, and of the paſſions, and that I ſhould be unable to live with thee, under all the tenderneſs of thy regards, under the wings of thy compaſſion, and under the protection of thy arm? Art thou then ſo cruel a maſter? The world which knows thee not, believes that thou rendereſt miſerable thoſe who ſerve thee: but we, O Lord, we know that thou art the gentleſt and beſt of maſters, the tendereſt of all fathers, the moſt faithful of all friends, the moſt munificent of all benefactors; and that thou giveſt a foretaſte, by a thouſand inward conſolations with which thou indulgeſt thy ſervants here below, of that eternal felicity which thou prepareſt for them hereafter.

SERMON

SERMON XVI.

THE WORD OF GOD.

MATTHEW iv. 4.

It is written, that man ſhall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

NOTHING can give a better idea of the power and of the ſublimity of the word of the goſpel, than the images employed by Jeſus Chriſt to foretel its effects. One while it is a ſacred ſword, which is to divide father from child, huſband from wife, brother from ſiſter, and man from himſelf; to bend all minds under the yoke of faith, to ſubjugate the Ceſars, to triumph over ſages and the learned, and to exalt the ſtandard of the croſs upon the wrecks of idols, and of empires; through that is repreſented to us its might, which the whole world hath been unable to reſiſt.

One while it is a divine fire, ſpread in an inſtant throughout the earth, which goes to diſſolve the mountains, to depopulate the cities, to people the foreſts, to reduce into aſhes the profane temples, to inflame the minds of men, and to make them fly, like madmen, to death, in the ſight of nations; and under theſe parabolical traits are figured to us the promptitude of its operations, and the rapidity of its victories.

One while it is a myſterious leaven, which joins and reunites the whole maſs; which binds all its parts together, and impreſſes upon them one general efficacy and virtue; which overthrows the diſtinctions of Jew and Gentile, of Greek and Barbarian, and gives to all the ſame name and the ſame being: and here you comprehend how great muſt be its ſanctity and inward might, ſeeing it hath purified the whole univerſe, and of all nations hath made but one people.

Another time it is a ſeed, which at firſt appears loſt in the earth, but afterwards ſprings up, and multiplies an hundred fold. And behold the firſt cauſe of the fecundity: not the huſbandman who ſows, but the inviſible Author who giveth the increaſe.

But at preſent Jeſus Chriſt compares it to bread, which ſerves as the food of man; and he thereby means to inform us that the word of the goſpel is a powerful and ſolid nouriſhment, often pernicious to ſuch as receive it into a diſeaſed and corrupted heart, and uſeful only to ſouls who, with an holy appetite, nouriſh themſelves with it, and who bring to this place a heart prepared to liſten to it.

To confine myſelf then to this idea, I ſhall ſay nothing of the wonders which this word, announced by twelve poor and humble men, formerly wrought throughout the univerſe. I ſhall paſs over in ſilence the ſanctity of its doctrine, the ſublimity of its counſels, the wiſdom of its maxims; and limiting myſelf to the inſtruction, and to that which may render the word of the goſpel which we announce beneficial to you, I ſhall inform you, firſtly, what are the diſpoſitions which ought to accompany you to this holy place for the purpoſe of hearing it; and, ſecondly,

ly, in what mind you ought afterwards to liſten to it: Two duties not only neglected, but even unknown to the greateſt part of the believers, who run in crowds to the ſeet of theſe Chriſtian pulpits, and which are the ordinary cauſe of our miniſtry being attended with ſo little fruit.

PART I. It is not the body of external works, ſays St. Auguſtin, which diſtinguiſhes the juſt from carnal Chriſtians: it is the inviſible ſpirit which animates them. Pious actions are frequently common to the good and the wicked; it is the diſpoſition of the heart which diſcriminates them. All run, ſays the apoſtle, but all reach not the goal, for it is not the ſame ſpirit which impels them.

Now, to apply this maxim to my ſubject; of all the duties of Chriſtian piety, there is undoubtedly none of which the external is more equally fulfilled by the worldly, and by the pious, than that of coming to hear the word of the goſpel. All run in crowds, like the Iſraelites formerly to the foot of the holy mountain, to hear the words of the law. Our temples are hardly ſufficient to contain the multitude of believers: profane aſſemblies break up, to ſwell the number of the holy aſſembly at the hours of inſtruction; and the ages which have ſeen the zeal of Chriſtians ſo relaxed on every other duty of religion, have not it would ſeem, witneſſed it in this. Nevertheleſs, of all the miniſtries confided to the church for the conſummation of the choſen, there is almoſt none ſo unprofitable as that of the word; and the moſt efficacious mean which the church hath, in every age, employed for the converſion of men, is become, at preſent, its feebleſt reſource. You, my brethren, are yourſelves a melancholy proof of this truth. Never were inſtructions more frequent than in our days, and never were converſions ſo rare.

It

It is of importance, therefore to explain the cauſes of ſo common and ſo deplorable an abuſe: now, the firſt is undoubtedly in the want of thoſe diſpoſitions which ought to accompany you to this holy place, in order to liſten to the word of ſalvation. And ſurely, if St Paul formerly commanded all believers to purify themſelves before coming to eat the bread of life: if he declared to them, that not to diſtinguiſh it from ordinary food was to render themſelves guilty of the body of the Lord, we have no leſs reaſon to tell you that you ought to prove yourſelves and to prepare your ſoul before you come to participate in that ſpiritual food which we break for the people; and that not to diſtinguiſh it from the word of men, in your manner of liſtening to it, is to render yourſelves guilty even of the word of Jeſus Chriſt.

The firſt diſpoſition required of you by the ſanctity of this word, when you come to hear it, is a ſincere deſire that it may be uſeful to you. Before coming to our temples, you ought privately, in your own houſe, to addreſs yourſelf to the Father of Light, to entreat him to beſtow upon you that ear of the heart which alone makes his voice to be heard; to give to his word that efficacy, that inward unction, thoſe attractions ſo powerful and ſo ſucceſsful in the converſion of ſinners, that he may overcome that inſenſibility which you have oppoſed to all the truths hitherto heard; that he fix thoſe momentary feelings which you have ſo often experienced while liſtening to us, but which have never been productive of any conſequences towards your ſalvation; that to us he give that zeal, that wiſdom, that dignity, that fulneſs of his ſpirit, thoſe piercing lights, that divine vehemence which carries conviction to the heart, and which never ſpeaks in vain; that he form in our hearts the reliſh of thoſe truths which he putteth in

our

our mouths; that he render us inſenſible to your praiſes, or to your cenſures, in order that we may be more uſeful to your wants; that the ardent deſire to accompliſh your ſalvation, fully compenſate the want of thoſe talents denied to us by nature; and that we honour our miniſtry, not by ſeeking to pleaſe, but to ſave you.

And ſurely, if the Iſraelites, before approaching mount Sinai, to hear the words of the law which the angel was to announce to them, were obliged, by the order of the Lord, to purify themſelves, to waſh their garments, and even to abſtain from the holy duties of marriage, in order to prepare themſelves for that grand operation, and to carry nothing to the foot of the mountain unworthy of the ſanctity of the law they went to hear; is it not, ſays a holy father, much more reaſonable, when you come to hear the words of a more holy law, that you bring there at leaſt thoſe precautions of faith, of piety, of external reſpect, which mark in you a ſincere deſire of conforming your manners to thoſe maxims which we are to announce to you? What, my brethren! are the precepts of Jeſus Chriſt, the words of eternal life, to be liſtened to with leſs precaution than the ordinances of a figurative law? Is it becauſe they are no longer announced to you by an angel from heaven? But are not we, equally as he, the inſtruments of God to promulgate his word, and, like him, do we not ſpeak in his place? Did the angel upon the mountain bear more the mark of divinity than we bear of him? He wrote the law upon tables of ſtone; the grace of our miniſtry engraves it on hearts. He promiſed milk and honey; and we announce real and everlaſting riches. The thunders of heaven, which accompanied his menaces againſt the tranſgreſſors of the law, overthrew the people ſtruck with terror at the foot of the mountain: but what were theſe threatenings

threatenings and temporal maledictions, their cities demoliſhed, their wives and children led into captivity, when compared to that eternal miſery which we are inſtructed continually to foretel to the violators of the law of God? Separate what we are from the miniſtry which we fill, and what is there here, either leſs awful or leſs reſpectable, than upon mount Sinai?

And, nevertheleſs, what preparations accompany you to an action ſo holy and ſo worthy of reſpect? A vain curioſity which you wiſh to gratify; an irkſome leiſure which you are well pleaſed to have amuſed; a religious ſpectacle, the pleaſure of which you wiſh to ſhare; a cuſtom which you follow, becauſe the world hath adopted it? What do I know? The pleaſure, perhaps of pleaſing a maſter, by imitating his reſpect for the word of the goſpel, and, far more, in order to attract his regards than thoſe of divine mercy? Once more, what do I know? Perhaps views ſtill more criminal, and of which we cannot ſpeak without degrading the dignity of our miniſtry. No motive of ſalvation leads you here; no view of faith prepares you, no ſentiment of piety accompanies you to this place; in a word, your coming to liſten to the holy word is no work of religion.

Firſt cauſe of the inutility of our miniſtry. For how is it poſſible that a proceeding altogether profane ſend a diſpoſition to grace? And that in this multitude of believers, aſſembled in this holy place, the goodneſs of God diſtinguiſh you from among the crowd, to open your heart to the word of life; you who have brought hither only thoſe diſpoſitions which are moſt calculated to keep at a diſtance that mercy? My brethren, as religion hath nothing grander, in one ſenſe, than the charge of the doctrine and of truth,

ſo

ſo piety likewiſe knows nothing ſo important, and which requires more religious precautions, than a proper attention to, and the being well inſtructed in them.

The ſecond diſpoſition which ought to accompany you to this holy place, is, a diſpoſition of grief and ſhame, founded on the little fruit you have hitherto reaped from ſo many truths already heard. You ought to reflect upon all thoſe feelings of compunction, which the Lord, through the miniſtry of the word, hath operated in your hearts, yet, which have never been attended with any ſucceſs towards your ſalvation; ſo many pious reſolutions, inſpired in this place, which ſeemed to promiſe a change of life, yet which have all vaniſhed on the firſt temptation. For what in this, ought moſt to alarm you, is, that all thoſe truths which have made only ſuch momentary impreſſions on you, are ſo many witneſſes, who ſhall one day depoſe againſt you before the tribunal of Jeſus Chriſt: in proportion to the times that the word of the goſpel hath failed to touch you even to repentance, ſo many times hath it rendered you more unworthy of obtaining the grace of repentance. Faith, on this point, admits of no medium; and if you depart unchanged, you depart, in ſome reſpect more culpable than before, becauſe, to all your other crimes, you have added that of contempt of the holy word.

Behold the reflections which ought to occupy your faith; and when you enter the aſſembly of believers, you ought, while trembling over the paſt, to demand it yourſelf: Am I going to hear a word which ſhall judge me, or truths which ſhall deliver me? Am I going to offer up to the compaſſion of God a docile and willing heart, or to his juſtice freſh motives of condemnation againſt myſelf? It is now ſo long ſince truths have been announced to me, the force of which

my

my utmoſt deference to the paſſions, cannot weaken in my mind, for, in ſpite of myſelf they make me inwardly acknowledge the error of my ways; yet, have I taken a ſingle ſtep towards quitting them? I have ſo long been warned, that the body of a Chriſtian is the temple of God; have I, in conſequence, become more temperate and chaſte? I have ſo long heard it ſaid, that, "if thine eye be evil, pluck it out, and caſt it far from thee;" have I attained ſtrength for ſuch ſeparations, which I know to be ſo indiſpenſable towards my ſalvation? I have ſo long been told, that to defer, as I have done, from day to day, my penitence, is to be determined to die in ſin; do I, even now, find myſelf more diſpoſed to quit my deplorable ſituation, and with a willing heart to begin the work of my ſalvation?

Great God! Ceaſe not to give me a heart ſuſceptible to truths, which always affect, but never change me; and puniſh not the abuſe which I make of thy word, by depriving it, with regard to me, of that efficacy which thou ſtill permitteſt it to have, in order to recal me from my errors to penitence! And, my brethren, how many believers who liſten to me, formerly feeling to thoſe truths which we announce, no longer offer to them now, but a tranquil, and an hardened heart? They neglected thoſe happy times, when grace was yet willing to open this way of converſion; and ever ſince ſo continued and ſo fatal a negligence, they liſten to us with indifference, and the moſt terrible truths in our mouths, are no longer in their ears, but ſounding braſs, and a tinkling cymbal.

Now, I aſk your own hearts, my brethren, if this feeling of ſorrow, for the little advantage you have hitherto reaped from ſo many inſtructions, is even known to you? Doth that

that outward pomp, with which you come here, worldly women announce that diſpoſition? Do not the ſame indecent and vain cares, which fit you for profane ſpectacles, accompany you to our inſtructions, where the world is condemned? Do you make the ſmalleſt difference there in your appearance? And doth it not ſeem, either that we are to announce the fooliſh maxims of the theatres, or that you come for the ſole purpoſe of inſulting, by an indecent carriage, even in the eyes of the world, the holy maxims of the goſpel!

But what do I ſay, my dear hearer? Far from reproaching to yourſelves ſo many truths, heard hitherto without fruit, alas! you are perhaps delighted at your inſenſibility; you perhaps pride yourſelves and indulge a deplorable vanity, in liſtening to us with indifference; you perhaps conſider it as giving you an air of conſequence, and as a proof of ſuperiority of mind, that what others are affected by, ſhould leave you tranquil and calm; you perhaps make a vain boaſt of your inſenſibility. It ſeems, that in you it would be a weakneſs to be affected by truths, which formerly triumphed over philoſophers, and Cæſars; by truths, evidently come down from heaven, and which bear with them ſuch divine marks of ſublimity and wiſdom; by truths, which do ſuch honour to man, and alone worthy of reaſon; by truths, ſo ſoothing and conſolatory to the heart, and alone calculated to beſtow internal tranquillity and peace. *Laſtly*, By truths, which propoſe to us ſuch grand intereſts, and towards which we can never be indifferent, without folly and madneſs. You vaunt the little ſucceſs of our zeal, and that all our diſcourſes leave you exactly as they found you; and in declaring this, you think you are doing honour to your reaſon. I do not ſay to you, that you make a boaſt of being in that depth of

the abyſs, and in that ſtate of reprobation which is now almoſt beyond reſource, and which is worthy both of horror and pity; but I ſay to you, that the ſureſt and moſt eſtabliſhed mark of a light and frivolous mind, of a weak and limited reaſon, of an ill-formed heart, equally incapable of elevation and dignity, is that of finding nothing which ſtrikes, which aſtoniſhes, which ſatisfies, and which intereſts you, in the wiſe and ſublime truths of the morality of Jeſus Chriſt.

. . . . .

For the ſinners of another character ſtill preſerve at leaſt ſome remains of reſpect for, and a certain conſciouſneſs of the truth which ſubſiſts with a life altogether criminal, but which is always the mark of a good heart, of a heart which ſtill retains a reliſh for good, of a judicious reaſon, which, though led away by the world and the paſſions, knows to do juſtice to itſelf, ſtill feels the force of that truth which condemns it, and leaves within us reſources of ſalvation and repentance. Theſe ſinners, at leaſt, acknowledge that we are right; they change nothing, it is true, of their manners; but the truth, at leaſt, affects, diſturbs, agitates, and excites within them ſome feeble deſires of ſalvation, and hopes of a future converſion; they are ſorry to find themſelves even too ſuſceptible of the terrors of faith; they are almoſt afraid of liſtening to us, leſt they loſe that falſe tranquillity, which is the only comfort of their crimes; on quitting our inſtructions, they ſeek, in diſſipation, to enliven a fund of anxiety and ſadneſs, which the truths they come from hearing have left in their ſoul; they immediately hurry into the world and its pleaſures, with that inward ſting which the word of God hath left in their heart, there to ſeek out a ſoothing and deceitful hand which may draw it out, and which may cloſe up that wound from which alone its cure ought to flow; they dread

dread the breaking of their chains; they turn away their head that they may not see that light which comes to disturb the comfort of their sleep. They love their passions, I confess, but, at least, they insult not the truth; on the contrary they render glory to his might, by erecting defences against it; they are feeble sinners, who, dreading their incapability of defence against God, fly from and shun him. But for you, you make a vain-glorious boast of listening to him with indifference, and not dreading him; you find it grand and philosophical to have placed yourselves above all these vulgar terrors; you believe that the pride of your reason would be dishonoured by any religious dread; and while you are internally the meanest and the most cowardly soul, the most dejected by the first danger which threatens you, the most disheartened by the smallest accident, the very shuttle-cock of every frivolous hope and fear of the earth, you pique yourself upon an undaunted courage against the truth; that is to say, that you are possessed of every thing which is mean and vulgar in fear, and you are ashamed of having that only portion of it which is dignified and reasonable; you have no resistance to offer against the world, and you make a vain parade of a senseless valour against God.

Second disposition which ought to accompany you to our instructions, a sorrow for the little fruit you have hitherto reaped from them. The last disposition is a grateful feeling for that mean of salvation still provided for you by God, in preserving the sacred trust of the truth, and in continuing amid you the succession of those ministers, alone authorised to announce to you the holy word.

In effect, the most terrible chastisement with which God formerly struck the iniquities of his people, was that of rendering

rendering his word rare and precious among them. As he ſaith through his prophet Amos, "And they ſhall wander "from ſea to ſea, and from the eaſt even to the weſt, "they ſhall run to and fro to ſeek the word of the Lord, "and ſhall not find it." And not only he ceaſed to raiſe up true prophets in Iſrael, but he likewiſe permitted falſe teachers to ſpring up among his people, who turned the tribes away from his worſhip, and preached gods to them which their fathers had never known.

Now, my brethren, it is a ſignal mercy of God, that notwithſtanding the iniquities which ſeem to have attained to their utmoſt height among you, he ſtill raiſeth up to you prophets and paſtors, who hold out a ſound and faultleſs word. It is a moſt ſingular protection of the Lord, that error hath not been permitted to prevail over truth among us. And what have you done to merit the being thus diſtinguiſhed from ſo many other nations? Why is it that you are not involved in the ſame condemnation? Why have you dwelt in the happy land of Goſhen, alone ſhone upon by the lights of heaven, while all the reſt of Egypt was inveloped in darkneſs? Is it not the ſole mercy of God who hath marked you out from among ſo many nations which applaud themſelves in their error? You are ſtill under the care of your paſtors; you ſtill receive from their mouths the doctrine of the apoſtles; truth ſtill flows upon you in a pure and divine ſtream; Chriſtian pulpits ſtill reſound in every part with the maxims of faith and of piety; and, by preſerving to you the doctrine and the bleſſings of inſtruction, the goodneſs of God ſtill provides for you a thouſand means of ſalvation.

Nevertheleſs, when you come to liſten to us, do you bring a heart filled with gratitude? Do you conſider as a ſignal

ſignal bleſſing of God, the charge of the truth and of the holy word, which he hath preſerved, and permitteth ſtill to be announced to you? Do you ever ſay with the prophet, "He hath not dealt ſo with any nation; and as for "his judgments, they have not known them?"

Alas! you bring here only vanity and an irreligious diſguſt; the moſt wearifome of your moments are thoſe which you employ in liſtening to truths which ought to compoſe the whole conſolation of your life. We are even obliged to reſpect your langours and diſguſts, by often mingling human ornaments with the truth, which is thereby weakened; it would indeed appear that we come here to ſpeak to you for ourſelves; and you give the ſame attention to us as you do to troubleſome mendicants who are ſoliciting your favour. You have no regret for moments occupied by the frivolous pleaſures of a profane ſpectacle; there alone it is that every thought of buſineſs, of fortune, and of family is rejected as an intruſion, and that, all elſe forgotten, the mind, formed for more ſerious matters, feaſts with avidity on chimerical adventures; it is from thence that you always come out occupied and delighted with the laſcivious maxims promulgated by a criminal theatre. You dwell with tranſport on thoſe parts which have made the moſt dangerous impreſſions upon the heart; you come filled with their remembrance even to the foot of the altar. Theſe images, ſo fatal to innocence, can no longer be effaced; while, on quitting the word, the only portion retained by your memory is perhaps the defects of him who hath announced it to you.

My brethren, God no longer puniſheth in a grievous manner the contempt of his word. He, no doubt, might ſtill tranſport his goſpel amidſt thoſe barbarous nations who have

have never heard his name, and abandon anew his heritage: He might draw from out of their deſerts ferocious and infidel nations, and deliver up to them our temples and our habitations, as he formerly delivered up thoſe churches ſo celebrated, which the Turtullians, the Cyperians, the Auguſtins, had illuſtrated, and where now not a trace of Chriſtianity remains but in the inſults which Jeſus Chriſt there receives, and in the ſhackles with which believers are there loaded: He might do it; but he avengeth himſelf more ſecretly, and perhaps more terribly. He leaveth to you ſtill the ſpectacle and all the outward ceremony of the preaching of the goſpel, but he turneth the whole fruit of it upon the ſimple and ignorant inhabitants of the country; the terrors of faith are no longer but for them. He no longer withdraweth his prophets from cities; but he taketh away from them, if I may venture to ſay ſo, the power and the influence of their miniſtry; he ſtriketh theſe holy clouds with dryneſs and unfruitfulneſs; he raiſeth up to you ſuch as render truth flowry and beautiful, but who do not render it amiable; who pleaſe, but who do not convert you; he permitteth the holy terrors of his doctrine to be weakened in our mouths: he no longer draweth forth from the treaſures of his mercy, grand characters like thoſe raiſed up in the ages of our forefathers, who renewed cities and kingdoms, who led the great and the people, and who changed the palaces of kings into houſes of penitence: he permitteth that we, weak men, ſucceed to theſe apoſtolic men.

What more ſhall I add? We aſſemble here, like Paul formerly in Athens, idle and curious ſpectators, whoſe only view is that of hearing ſomething new; while thoſe who perform the functions of their miniſtry, among your vaſſals, ſee with conſolations at their feet, like Eſdras formerly, ſimple Iſraelites, who are unable to retain their

tears

tears, in hearing only the words of the law. We amuſe the leiſure and the idleneſs of princes and the great of the earth, while, in the country, holy miniſters bring forth Jeſus Chriſt, and reap an abundant harveſt; in a word, we preach and they convert. It is thus, O my God, that in ſecret thou exerciſeſt ſevere and terrible judgments.

But, my brethren, why may not we ſay here to you, what Paul and Barnabas formerly ſaid to the unbelieving Jews? "It was neceſſary that the word of God ſhould firſt "have been ſpoken to you; but ſeeing ye put it from you, "and judge yourſelves unworthy of everlaſting life, lo, "we turn to the gentiles." We ſhall therefore turn to the nations hitherto abandoned, towards thoſe humble and poor people buried in ignorance, who cultivate your lands, and who will, with faith and gratitude, receive that grace which you reject. Ah! our labours would be much more availing, our yoke more eaſy, our miniſtry more conſoled; we ſhould not then, it is true, reckon among our hearers names celebrated in hiſtory; but we would reckon the names of thoſe who are written in heaven: we ſhould not ſee there aſſembled all thoſe titles, and ſplendid dignities, which form the whole glory of the world which paſſeth away; but we would there ſee faith, piety, and innocence, which compoſe the whole glory of the Chriſtian who eternally endureth; we ſhould not hear there vain applauſes given to the language of the man, and not to that of faith; but we would behold thoſe tears flowing which are the immortal praiſe of grace: our pulpits might not indeed be ſurrounded with ſo much pomp; but our hearers would be a ſpectacle worthy of angels, and of God.

Such are the diſpoſitions which ought to prepare you for our inſtructions. It is neceſſary now to inſtruct you on the mind in which you ought to liſten to us.

PART

PART II. In order towards inſtructing you on the mind in which you ought to liſten to the holy word, it is required only to eſtabliſh at firſt what are its authority and its end. Its authority, which is divine, demands a reſpectful and docile mind; its end, which is the converſion of hearts, demands a ſpirit of faith, which ſearches in it only ſuch lights as may enable it to quit its errors, and ſuch remedies as may cure its evils.

1ſtly, I ſay that its authority is divine. Yes, my brethren, the word which we announce to you is not our word, but the word of him who ſendeth us. From the moment that we are eſtabliſhed by him in the holy miniſtry, through the way of a legitimate call, he willeth that you conſider us as ſent by him, as ſpeaking to you here on his part, and as only lending our weak voice to his divine words. We bear, it is true, that treaſure in veſſels of earth; but it thereby loſes nothing of its majeſty. Like thoſe pitchers which Gideon formerly employed againſt the enemies of the Lord, the ſound may be mean and contemptible; but truth, that divine light which God hath placed within us, is not, from thence, leſs deſcended from heaven, or deſtined, like the lamps of Gideon, ſtill to ſtrike with terror unfaithful ſouls.

Now, you owe, in the firſt place, to the authority of this divine word, a pious docility and an attention to it, rather in the light of diſciples than of judges. In effect, we expoſe to you the rules of worſhip and of piety, the deciſions of the goſpel, the laws of the church, and the maxims of the holy. We come not here to give you our own opinions, our prejudices, our thoughts; this is not a pulpit of controverſy, it is the place of truth; nothing which can afford room for diſputation ought even to find place

place in the pulpit of peace and of unity; we ſpeak here in the name of the church, and are only the interpreters of her faith and of her doctrine.

Nevertheleſs, how many of thoſe men, ſo wiſe in their own conceit, and who pique themſelves upon ſagacity and reaſon, come here with a mind ſet againſt, and, as it were, watchfully upon guard againſt all the terrors of the holy word! They make not a boaſt, like the ſinners we have lately mentioned, of being callous to all truth; but they look upon our miniſtry as an art of exaggeration and hyperbole; the moſt holy emotions of zeal are only, in their opinion, ſtudied tricks of human artifice; the moſt awful threatenings, only the ſallies of a vain eloquence; the moſt incontrovertible maxims, only diſcourſes adapted rather to cuſtom than to truth. Such, my brethren, is the deplorable ſituation in which the greateſt part of you find yourſelves here. You always inwardly oppoſe to that truth which we announce the maxims and the prejudices of the world which contradict it; you are ingenious in weakening in your own breaſt, by ſpecious reaſons, the pretended exceſs of our maxims; you come here to combat, and not to yield to the force, or to the light of truth: you come here, it would ſeem, only in order to enter into conteſtation with God, to invalidate the eternal immutability of his word, to undertake the intereſts of error againſt the glory of truth, and to be the inward apologiſts of the world and of the paſſions, even in that holy place deſtined to condemn and to combat them. Ah! ſuffer that truth, at leaſt, to triumph in its own temple; diſpute not with it that feeble victory, it which has formerly triumphed over the whole univerſe; oppreſs it, and welcome, amidſt the world, and in thoſe aſſemblies of vanity which error collects, and where error is enthroned. Is it not

enough that you have baniſhed it from the world, and that it dare no longer ſhew itſelf without being expoſed to deriſions and cenſures? Leave to us, at leaſt, the melancholy conſolation of daring ſtill to publiſh it in the face of thoſe altars which it hath raiſed up, and which ought ſurely to ſerve it, at leaſt, as a place of refuge.

You accuſe us of exaggeration. Great God! And thou one day wilt perhaps judge us for weakening the force and the influence of thy word, in conſequence of not giving ſufficient conſideration to it at the feet of the altars! And thou wilt one day perhaps reproach us for having accommodated the holy ſeverity of thy goſpel to the indulgences and ſoftenings of our age! And thou wilt perhaps range us one day among the workers of iniquity, becauſe the lukewarmneſs and negligence of our manners have taken from the word which we announce that terror and that divine vehemence which can only be found in a mouth conſecrated by piety and by penitence!

How, my brethren! The truths of ſalvation, ſuch as Jeſus Chriſt has ſet forth to us, would be incapable of alarming conſciences, were the mind of man not to add extraneous terrors to them! Paul formerly exaggerated then, when the Roman governor, in ſpite of the pride of a falſe wiſdom, and all the prejudices of an idolatrous worſhip, trembled, ſays St. Luke, while hearing him ſpeak of righteouſneſs, of temperance, and of the awful ſpectacle of a judgment to come? Paul then exaggerated, when the inhabitants of cities came ſtriking their breaſts, melting in tears at his feet, and bringing into the middle of the public places the laſcivious or impious books, and all the other inſtruments of their paſſions, in order to make a ſacrifice of them to the Lord?

You

You accuſe us of adding additional terrors to the words of the goſpel; but where are the conſciences which we diſturb? Where are the ſinners whom we alarm? Where are the worldly ſouls, who, ſeized with dread on their departure from our diſcourſes, go to conceal themſelves in the deepeſt ſolitudes, and, by holy exceſſes of penitence, to expiate the diſſoluteneſs of their paſt manners? The ages which have preceded us have often ſeen ſuch examples. Do we ever witneſs ſuch inſtances now? Ah! Would to God, ſaid formerly an holy father, that you could convict me of having inſpired a ſingle ſoul with theſe ſalutary terrors! Would to God, ſaid he to ſome worldly ſages of his time, who accuſed him of exaggerating the dangers and the corruption of the world, that a ſingle inſtance might ſupport your aſſertion! And I may ſay to you here, with even more reaſon than that grand character, would to God that the conſequences of ſo bleſſed an indiſcretion could be ſhewn to me! Would to God that you had examples with which to reproach us, in juſtification of your cenſures! Ah! We with pleaſure would ſuffer the blame, could but the ſucceſs be ſhewn to us with which we are reproached!

Alas! We manage only too much, perhaps, your weakneſs; we reſpect, perhaps too much, cuſtoms which a long uſage has conſecrated, in the fear of appearing to cenſure the grand examples by which they are authoriſed; we dare ſcarcely ſpeak of certain irregularities, leſt our cenſures ſhould appear to fall rather on the perſons than on the vices; we are obliged to content ourſelves with ſhewing truths to you from afar, which we ought to place immediately under your eye, and even your ſalvation frequently ſuffers through the exceſs of our precautions and our timid prudence. What ſhall I ſay? Weakneſs often extorts

extorts from us praiſes, where zeal ought to place anathemas and cenſures; like the world, we allow ourſelves to be dazzled by names and titles; that which formerly encouraged the Ambroſes intimidates us; and, becauſe we owe you reſpect, we often keep back from you that truth which we ought ſtill more to reſpect; yet, after all this, you accuſe us of exaggerating, of overſtraining truths, and of faſhioning from them phantoms of our own brain, in order to alarm thoſe who liſten to us.

But, what advantage could we draw from an artifice ſo unworthy of that truth confided to us? Theſe overſtrained and puerile declamations might ſuit the venal eloquence of thoſe Sophiſts who, amid the Grecian ſchools, anxiouſly ſought to attract diſciples to themſelves, by vaunting the wiſdom of their ſect. But for us, my brethren, ah! our wiſh ſhould be to have it in our power to render your path more eaſy, far from throwing freſh obſtacles in the way. Wherefore ſhould we diſhearten you in the enterpriſe of ſalvation, by ſtarting up chimerical difficulties? It is our duty to ſmooth ſuch as may actually be found in it, and to tender you an aſſiſting hand, in order to ſuſtain your weakneſs.

Meditate, my brethren, upon the law of Jeſus Chriſt; what do I ſay? Only open the goſpel and read; then ſhall you find that we draw a veil of diſcretion over the ſeverity of its maxims; then, far from complaining of our exceſſes, you will yourſelves ſupply the deficiencies of our ſilence and of our ſoftenings, and will ſay to yourſelves what we dread to ſay, becauſe you could never bear it. Great God! To bear his croſs every day, to deſpiſe the world and all it contains, to live as a ſtranger upon the earth, to attach himſelf to thee alone, to renounce all which flatters the

the ſenſes, inceſſantly to renounce himſelf, to conſider as happy thoſe who weep or who are afflicted, behold the ſubſtance of thy holy law, and which every Chriſtian undertakes. O what can the human mind add to the rigour of this doctrine! What could we announce to you more melancholy or more formidable to ſelf-love? Conſequently, your reproaches are merely a vain language of the world, and one of thoſe faſhions of ſpeaking which no one examines, and each adopts; your conſcience inwardly belies it; and when you ſpeak candidly, you confeſs that we are in the right, and that the goſpel is a preacher much more ſevere and more fearful for the world, and for thoſe who love it, than it could be poſſible for us ever to be.

First duty which the authority of the holy word exacts of you, viz. a docile ſpirit.

Secondly, you owe to the authority of this holy word a ſpirit of ſincerity, and inward application of it to yourſelf; that is to ſay, to be a rigorous examinator here of your own conſcience; to have inceſſantly before your eyes, on one ſide, the ſtate of your ſoul, and, on the other, the truths which we announce; to meaſure yourſelf according to that rule; to ſearch into yourſelf by that light; to judge yourſelf by that law; to liſten to, as if addreſſed to you alone, the holy maxims announced to the multitude; to conſider yourſelf as alone here before Jeſus Chriſt, who ſpeaks to you alone through our mouth, and who ſends us here perhaps for you alone. For, my brethren, no one here takes to himſelf that truth which attacks and condemns him; no one thinks himſelf an intereſted perſonage; it would ſeem that we form at pleaſure to ourſelves phantoms of the brain, for the purpoſe of combating them, and that the reality of that ſinner whom we attack is no where in exiſtence. The

lewd and diſſolute perſon recogniſes not himſelf in the moſt animated and moſt ſtriking traits of his paſſion. The man, loaded with ill-acquired wealth, and perhaps with the blood and ſpoils of the people, joins with us in deprecating that very iniquity in others, and ſees not that he judges himſelf. The courtier, conſumed with ambition, and who ſacrifices conſcience and integrity every day to that idol, frankly admits of the meanneſs of that paſſion in his equals, and looks upon it as a virtue, and as a deep experience of the court in himſelf. Every one continually views himſelf by certain favourable ſides, which effectually hinder him from ever knowing himſelf ſuch as he is. In vain do we mark you, as I may ſay, in the moſt pointed manner; you always inwardly find out ſome ſoftened traits, which alter the reſemblance. You whiſper to yourſelf, I am not this man. And while the public makes application of ſuch ſtriking truths to us, we alone either ſucceed in being convinced that they are not drawn for us, or we only find out in them the defects of our brethren; in our own exacteſt portraits, we ſearch out foreign likeneſſes; we are ingenious in turning the blow upon others, which truth had given to us alone; the malignity of the application is the only fruit which we reap from that picture of our vices made from the pulpit, and we raſhly judge our brethren where we ought to have judged only ourſelves. And thus it is, O my God! that men become corrupted, miſapply every thing, and that even the light of truth ſeals up their eyes upon their own errors, and opens them only to ſee in others either what is not, or what it ought to have kept entirely hid from them!

Such are the duties, which the authority of the holy word exacts of you: let us now proceed to thoſe attached to its end. Its end, my brethren, you know, is the converſion

verſion of hearts, the eſtabliſhment of truth, the deſtruction of error and of ſin, and the ſanctification of the name of Jeſus Chriſt; all there is grand, elevated, important, and worthy of the moſt ſublime function of the hierarchy; and conſequently, it is from thence to be inferred, that you ought to liſten to us with a reſpectful and religious ſpirit, which deſpiſes not the ſimplicity of our diſcourſes, and with a ſpirit, of faith, which ſeeks nothing human in it, nothing frivolous, nothing which does not correſpond with the excellency and the dignity of its end.

I ſay a ſpirit of religious reſpect, which deſpiſes not the ſimplicity of our diſcourſes; for however enlightened you may in other reſpects be, you ought not in conſequence of your pretended lights, to claim a title to neglect the inſtructions of the church to believers. The unction of the ſpirit will always inform you of ſomething here, of which you would perhaps have remained ignorant. If poſſeſſed of that knowledge which is the cauſe of pride, you will be ſtrengthened in that charity which edifies. If your mind acquire nothing new, your heart ſhall perhaps be made to feel new things; you will there at leaſt learn that your knowledge is nothing, if you be ignorant of the ſcience of ſalvation; that you are but a cloud without moiſture, elevated, it is true, above other men, by your talents, and by the ſuperiority of your knowledge, but empty of grace, and the ſport of every wind and of every paſſion in the ſight of God; and, *laſtly*, That a ſimple and pure ſoul, ſhall, in an inſtant, be taught the whole in the boſom of God, and ſhall be transformed from light to light; while, on the contrary, that you, after an entire life of watchings and ardent ſtudy, and the attainment of an uſeleſs maſs of knowledge and lights, ſhall perhaps reap for your portion, only eternal darkneſs.

What

What a miſtake, my brethren, to baniſh yourſelves from theſe holy aſſemblies, under pretence, that you already know enough, and likewiſe that you are already ſufficiently verſed in all the duties of piety, which you have long profeſſed; and that Chriſtian reading, and a ſmall degree of reflection in private, go a greater way, and are attended with more benefit, than all our diſcourſes! But, my dear hearer, if you profeſs piety and righteouſneſs, what ſweeter conſolation can you enjoy, than that of hearing the wonders of the Lord publiſhed, the ordinances of his holy law, truths which you love and practiſe, and of which you ought to wiſh the knowledge to be given to all men? What ſight more ſoothing and conſoling to you, than that of your brethren aſſembled here at the foot of the altar, attentive to the words of life, abſent from the ſpectacles of the world, and removed from the occaſions of ſin, forming holy deſires, opening their hearts to the voice of God, perhaps conceiving the premices of the holy ſpirit, and the commencement of their penitence, and to be enabled to join yourſelf with them, in order to obtain from the father of mercies, the completion in their ſoul of the work of ſalvation, which he hath begun to operate within them?

Not but that the moſt conſolatory reſources are furniſhed to Chriſtian piety, by the meditation of the divine writings. But the Lord hath attached graces to the power of our miniſtry, and to the legitimate calling, which you will not find elſewhere. The moſt ſimple truths in the mouth of the paſtors, or of thoſe who ſpeak to you in their place, draw an efficacy from the grace of their miſſion, which is not inherent to them; the ſame book of Iſaiah, which, when read from a chariot by that officer of the queen of Ethiopia, was to her, as a book ſealed up, and only amuſed her leiſure without enlightening her faith, explained by Philip, inſtantly

inſtantly became to her a word of life, and of ſalvation. And, *laſtly*, You owe that example to your brethren, that edification to the church, that reſpect to the word of Jeſus Chriſt, that uniformity to the ſpirit of peace and of unity, which binds us together. O baniſh yourſelves, and ſo much the better, from thoſe profane and criminal aſſemblies, where piety, alas! is always a ſtranger, ſuffering, and conſtrained; but here is its place, and its home; this is the aſſembly of the holy, ſeeing it is only towards their formation, that our miniſtry hath been eſtabliſhed, and ſtill continues to endure in the church.

I have ſaid, in the ſecond place, a ſpirit of faith; and, in this diſpoſition, two others are compriſed: a love of the holy word, independent of the talents of the man who announces it to you; a taſte, formed by religion which comes not here in ſearch of vain ornaments, but of the ſolid truths of ſalvation; that is to ſay, to liſten to it, neither with a ſpirit of cenſure, nor with a ſpirit of curioſity.

And, in effect, your love of the word of Jeſus Chriſt ought to render you blind, as I may ſay, to the defects of thoſe who announce it to you; in a mouth even rude and unpoliſhed, you ought to find it lovely, divine, and worthy of all your homage; in whatever ſhape it be preſented to you, decked with pompous ornaments, or ſimple and neglected, provided that its celeſtial traits are ſtill to be recogniſed, it preſerves the ſame rights over your heart. And indeed, is any portion of its ſanctity loſt by paſſing through leſs brilliant, and leſs copious channels? Did the holy word of the Lord loſe any thing of its dignity, whether he formerly gave it out, from a buſh, mean and deſpicable to the ſight, or from a cloud of glory; whether he gave

out his oracles in the midſt of the deſert, and in a tabernacle covered with the ſkins of animals, or in the temple of Solomon, the moſt magnificent which hath ever been raiſed up to the glory of his name? And did the faith of Iſrael make any diſtinction, when it was the ſame Lord who every where ſpake?

Nevertheleſs, how few among all thoſe who liſten to us, who do not conſtitute themſelves judges and cenſurers of the holy word! They come here merely for the purpoſe of deciding on the merit of thoſe who announce it, of drawing fooliſh compariſons, of pronouncing on the difference of the lights and of the inſtructions; they think it an honour the being difficult to pleaſe; they paſs without attention over the moſt ſtriking truths, and which might be of the moſt eſſential benefit to all; and the only fruit reaped by them from a Chriſtian diſcourſe, is confined to the miſerable pride of having, better than any other, remarked its defects. This is ſo truly the caſe, that we may with juſtice apply to the greateſt part of our hearers what Joſeph, become the preſerver of Egypt, ſaid, through pure artifice, to his brethren: It is not to ſeek food that you are come here; it is as ſpies, to ſee the nakedneſs of the land. It is not to nouriſh yourſelves with the bread of the word, or to ſeek aſſiſtance and efficacious remedies for your evils, that you come to liſten to us; it is in order to find out cauſe for applying ſome vain cenſures, and to ſhew your ſkill in remarking our defects; which defects are perhaps a terrible puniſhment upon you of the Lord, who, in conſequence of your crimes, refuſeth more accompliſhed labourers in his vineyard, who would have been enabled to recal you to repentance.

But

But candidly, my brethren, however weak our language may be, do we not always ſay enough to overthrow you, to diſſipate your errors, and to make you inwardly confeſs irregularities which you are unable to juſtify to yourſelves? Are ſuch ſublime talents required to tell you that fornicators, extortioners, and men without mercy, ſhall never enter the kingdom of God; that unleſs you become penitent you ſhall periſh; and that it matters little to become maſter of the whole world, if you thereby loſe your ſoul? Is it not, in fact, that very ſimplicity which conſtitutes the whole force, and gives ſuch energy to theſe divine truths? And ought they to be leſs alarming to the criminal ſoul, though in the mouth of the moſt obſcure individual of the miniſtry?

And beſides, granting that it were here permitted us to recommend ourſelves, as the apoſtle formerly ſaid to ungrateful believers, more attentive to cenſure the ſimplicity of his appearance and of his language, and, as he ſays himſelf, his contemptible figure in the eyes of men, than touched with the endleſs fatigues and dangers which he had ſurmounted, in order to announce to them the goſpel, and to convert them to truth; were it permitted, we might ſay to you, my brethren, we ſuſtain, ſolely on your account, the whole weight of a painful and laborious miniſtry; our cares, our watchings, our prayers, the endleſs toilings which qualify us for, and accompany us in theſe Chriſtian pulpits, have no other object but that of your ſalvation. O do not our pains entitle us at leaſt to your reſpect and gratitude? Is it poſſible that that zeal which ſuffers all, in order to ſecure your ſalvation, can ever become the melancholy ſubject of your deriſions and cenſures?

ſures? Demand of God, good and well, that, for the glory of the church and for the honour of his goſpel, he raiſe up to his people labourers powerful in ſpeech, of thoſe men whom the ſole unction of the ſpirit of God renders nervous and eloquent, and who announce the goſpel in a manner worthy of its elevation and ſanctity. But like wiſe demand, that, when we happen therein to fail, your faith may ſupply the deficiencies of our diſcourſes; that your piety may render to truth, in your own hearts, that which it loſes in our mouths; and that, through your unrighteous diſtaſtes, you force not the miniſters of the goſpel to have recourſe, in order to pleaſe you, to the vain artifices and colouring of an human eloquence, to ſhine rather than to inſtruct, and, like the Iſraelites formerly, to go down to the Philiſtines to ſharpen their inſtruments, deſtined ſolely to cultivate the earth; I mean to ſay, to ſeek in profane learning, or in the language of an hoſtile world, foreign ornaments to embelliſh the ſimplicity of the goſpel; and to give to inſtruments, and to talents deſtined to increaſe, to multiply, and to ſtrengthen the holy ſeed, a vain brilliancy and a ſubtlety which blunt its energy and its virtue, and which ſubſtitute a falſe ſplendor in the place of truth and zeal.

And now, my brethren, behold the laſt fault inimical to that ſpirit of faith; it is a ſpirit of curioſity. You do not ſufficiently diſtinguiſh the holy gravity of our miniſtry from that vain and frivolous art which has nothing in view but the arrangement of the diſcourſe and the glory of eloquence; you aſſiſt at our diſcourſes with the ſame view as Auguſtin, ſtill a ſinner, did in former times at thoſe of Ambroſe. It was not, ſays that illuſtrious penitent, in order

der to learn from the mouth of the man of God the ſecrets of eternal life, which I had ſo long ſought, nor the deſire of finding in them remedies for the ſhameful and inveterate wounds of my ſoul, and which thou, O my God! alone art acquainted with; it was in order to examine whether his eloquence correſponded with his great reputation, and if his diſcourſes warranted the unbounded applauſes which his hearers beſtowed upon him. The truths which he announced intereſted me not; I was moved only by the beauty and the charms of the diſcourſe.

And ſuch is ſtill, at preſent, the deplorable ſituation of far too many believers who liſten to us; who, like Auguſtin, loaded with crimes and fettered with the moſt ſhameful paſſions, far from coming here to ſeek remedies for their evils, come in ſearch of vain ornaments, which amuſe without curing the afflicted, which are the means of our pleaſing the ſinner, but have not influence towards making the ſinner diſpleaſed with himſelf. They come here, it would appear, to ſay to us what the inhabitants of Babylon formerly ſaid to the captive Iſraelites, "Sing us one of "the ſongs of Zion." They come in ſearch of harmony and delight, in the ſerious and important truths of the morality of Jeſus Chriſt; in the ſighs of the ſorrowful Zion, captive in a ſtrange land; and require of us that we flatter the ear while publiſhing the threatenings and the rigid maxims of the goſpel.

O you who now liſten to me, and whom this diſcourſe regards, reflect for a moment, I entreat of you, upon yourſelves; your caſe is, as it were, deſperate in the eyes of God; your wounds, become virulent through their long-ſtanding

ſtanding, no longer leave almoſt a hope of cure; your evils preſs, time is ſhort; God, wearied with having ſo long borne with you, is at laſt on the point of ſtriking and of ſurpriſing you: behold the eternal miſeries which we foretell to you, and which happen every day to your equals. You are not far diſtant form the fulfilment; we ſhew you the terrible ſword of the Lord ſuſpended over your head, and ready to fall upon you; and far from ſhuddering at the afterpart of your deſtiny, or taken any meaſures to avoid the impending blow, you childiſhly amuſe yourſelves in examining whether it ſhine and have a luſtre; and you ſearch, even in the terrors of the prediction, for the puerile beauties of a vain eloquence. Great God! How deſpicable and worthy of deriſion doth the ſinner appear when we view him through thy light!

For, my brethren, are we then here upon a profane tribunal, for the purpoſe of courting with artificial words the ſuffrages of an idle aſſembly, or in a Chriſtian pulpit, and in the place of Jeſus Chriſt, to inſtruct, to reprove, and to ſanctify you in the name, and under the eyes of him who ſends us? Is it here a diſpute for worldly fame, an idle exerciſe of the faculties, or the moſt holy and the moſt important miniſtry of faith? O why do you come to loiter away with our feeble talents, or to ſeek human qualifications where God alone ſpeaketh and acteth? Are not the humbleſt inſtruments the moſt ſuitable to the mightineſs of his grace? Do not the walls of Jericho fall when he pleaſeth, at the ſound of the weakeſt trumphets? O what matters it to us that we pleaſe, if we do not change you? Of what conſequence is it to us the being eloquent, if you continue always ſinners? What fruit can we reap from

from your applauſes; if you reap none yourſelves from our inſtructions? Our only praiſe, our only glory is the eſtabliſhment of the reign of God in your hearts; your tears alone, much rather than your applauſes, can prove our eulogium; and we covet no other crown than yourſelves, and your eternal ſalvation.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.